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ALBION AND ROSAMOND
& THE LIVING VOICE

[Two Dramas]

ANNA WOLFROM

2021. 10. 10.

Wolfram

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ALBION AND ROSAMOND
and
THE LIVING VOICE †

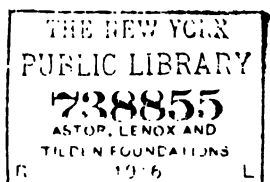
TWO DRAMAS

BY

ANNA WOLFROM



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1916



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ALBION AND ROSAMOND

A HISTORICAL DRAMA

CHARACTERS

ALBION, king of the Lombards

KUNIMOND, king of the Gepidae

AUDOIN, father of Albion

HADUWALT, the keeper of the king's door

VESTRALP, one of Albion's followers

HELMECHIS, armor-bearer of Albion

GISULP, nephew of Albion, and master of the
horse

NARSES, a trusty servant of the pope

PEREDEO, chamberlin of Kunimond

ROSAMOND, wife of Albion, and daughter of Kuni-
mond

GAMBARA, cousin of Rosamond

ALBSWINDA, daughter of Albion by his first wife

FREYA, sister of Albion

ELFRIEDA, daughter of the chagan of the Avars

ACT I

The scene is laid in Pannonia, north of the Danube, in the meadhall of the Lombards. At the head of the long mess table sits AUDOIN, the old king; on the sides are his worthy fighters, all partaking of wine and food. On the walls hang shields, spears, helmets, javelins and other implements of warfare of the early Germans. The dress of the men is very primitive, tunics of homespun linen with overdress of skins, or skins hanging from the shoulder.

Early spring in the middle of the sixth century
A. D.

[The blast of an auroch's horn is heard]

AUDOIN. Who comes?

HADUWALT *[rising from his seat at the table]*. Perhaps it is the return of your messenger from the camp of the Gepidae.

AUDOIN. Not yet, my good fellow. The enemy's land is far; the king slow to give an answer.

HADUWALT. The enemy sleeps little; they are ever on the watch, for their many eyes scan the mountain tops here about. 'Twas but yesterday that I mistook a prowler for a deer, and succeeded in wounding him only in the arm with my arrow.

VESTRALP. Were your aim as good as mine you would have put the arrow into his heart.

AUDOIN. No, no, comrade; we have no desire to kill one lonely man. It is the tribe — the tribe must be wiped out with but a blow.

A TRIBESMAN. How, my king! Know you well that the prowlers are but spies who form a linked chain from here to the camp of Kunimond.

AUDOIN [*his eye flashing*]. Invite the spies in; let them know more. The more they know, the greater their fear will be.

[*ALBION thrusts the door open and stands in the entrance. His huge physique is commanding, but his eye is obedient as he looks at his father. All gaze in silence at him for a moment*]

AUDOIN. What! you, my son?

ALBION. Yes, my great father and conqueror.

AUDOIN. What do you here? Bring you news from Kunimond?

ALBION. None, father. [*Casting his eye to the ground*]

AUDOIN. What are you doing here then, you weak imp of Wotan? [*Helps himself to wine from the wassail bowl*]

ALBION. Watchers of Asgard, I beg a place among you.

AUDOIN. Do you wish to have me violate the custom of our tribe? Know you well that no son can dine with his father, the king, until he has won his arms from the king of the enemy.

ALBION [*the fire of the barbarian is in his eye*]. I brought you but three days ago the helmet and javelin of a Roman general.

AUDOIN. The white curs. Call yourself a warrior when you have merely gone among the remnant of Cæsar's people, who now hire their soldiers, where you can buy arms for the price of your song?

ALBION. [*The gray heron's pinion shakes in the Roman helmet that he wears; the alderwood in his right hand strikes heavily across the round shield on his left arm.*] Audoin's son never bought even a drink of Siculian wine from a suckled son of Romulus. [*Going*] I will bring you back a spear of the enemy or I'll let the

Gepidae send mine to you that you may return them to Rome.

HADUWALT [*standing with extended arm against the door*]. Good speed, noble son of the Lombards; no prince was ever more worthy of the name.

ALBION [*extends his alderwood toward HADUWALT*]. Your good grace speeds me on.

HADUWALT [*grasps firmly the shaft for a moment; then with an onward movement*]. Your father's blood will some day conquer Italy.

AUDOIN. What say you, you weakling of a wolf's brood? No blood of mine will ever cross those mountains before your king. I alone will lead my people thither. [*All rise from the table*]

HADUWALT. We have long been camped in Pannonia, my good sire; I tremble in the calves of my legs from the weary days of rest. Your fear of the enemy marks well the end of the noble sons of Wotan.

AUDOIN [*with great anger*]. No fear have I of the Gepidae, you green-eyed toad. Because they stand between us and fair Italia, is for no other reason than the she-wolf that suckled our children killed off all the brave ones in their infancy. [*Chuckles loud*] Had you shown any

signs of the strength of our fathers you would not have been waiting here. [*Hobbles across the room, shaking his fist*] There are many cowards who bear the name of Wotan, but you, you whelp, have the whitest liver of them all.

HADUWALT [*white with rage and clenching his fist*]. If you were other than the great king of my people I would strangle you in the very next instant, that your nostrils might never quiver again with the burning fever of a woman's —

AUDOIN [*rushes at him, but is restrained by an attendant*]. Dog!

VESTRALP. Hold, my good men. It is women's words only that stir up your hearts to anger. No cowards ever were born to the Lombards. We are fighters — all.

TRIBESMEN. We drink to Vestralp. Yes; fighters all.

VESTRALP. Is it not so, worthy king? Did not the father of the race whom the grey heron brought from Wotan say that one day his sons would conquer lands and make the name Lombards, borne by their father, immortal?

AUDOIN. I, son, have given my life to carry out that prophecy. The years are many that crown my head, the roads have been rough and the

struggles endless — yet I possess the courage to go on. I will go on.

HADUWALT. King, we are one and all with you. Are we not, kinsmen?

TRIBESMEN. Ready we are, brother.

HELMECHIS [*stands forth from the crowd*]. Three years have we faced the foe that separates us from the longed-for Italia. If we cannot break the back-bone of the Gepidae, wherefore do we lie here forming a wall against the enemy on the North?

AUDOIN. If in three sleeps of the heron mother we find that Narses has not returned to bid us march on with the Roman's help, we go alone.

VESTRALP. Why wait? Know you well that Rome's emperor will give us no aid, unless he sees himself repaid thrice.

HADUWALT [*the shrill note of the tuba is heard*]. Some one comes through the lines of the watchers. [*Opens a slit in the door. Looks out with peering eye*] He comes; it is the Roman messenger returned.

AUDOIN. Narses brings good tidings, no doubt.

NARSES [*entering, tired and weary, the old priest, with long beard, raises up the grapes from the fields of prized Italy*]. I have returned, my

noble Audoin, with news from Pavia as well, and brought the sweet fruit of her cherished vineyards.

AUDOIN. What care I for the vineyards of the Roman thieves? Have you seen Theoderic's ghost, and what message has he sent to his enemy of the North?

NARSES. Chief —

AUDOIN. King of the Lombards.

NARSES [*bowing*]. King of the Lombards. Great and mighty are the forces in and out of Pavia. The Maurusian troopers guard the walls, while within the Isaurian mercenaries sing heroic songs to the children that the deeds of their ancestors may inspire them.

AUDOIN. Sing songs ; sing songs, hey?

NARSES. Aye, my king.

AUDOIN. Sing they not of the children of Wotan that await their Lorch armor as a token of submission? The exarch, what promises did he make?

NARSES. None, my lord, none. He has sent a thousand of his best virgin shield-bearers to the Gepidae to help them against the fury of the Lombards.

AUDOIN. What sayest thou? [*Rises from his seat and supports himself with one hand against*

the skin-covered back] To aid the enemy of — of Audoin. Curses on them. What compact would he make with me?

NARSES. The exarch but laughed at your message. He would make a treaty on no terms. Bade me tell the king of the Lombards that in the full of another moon his legions would cross the Alps.

AUDOIN. To fight the Gepidae?

NARSES. To aid them against you, king.

AUDOIN [*tottering*]. We shall see, we shall see. The pagan Huns, the Avars shall hear of this. Kunimond shall never live to be the cat's-paw of the Romans.

NARSES. Our people have already suffered so at your hand, king Audoin. Have mercy on a Christian folk.

AUDOIN. Christian dogs. What care I for their white livers and black eyes? My last terms have been sent. I'll wring the neck of every son of Romulus.

NARSES. Have mercy, Son of Wotan. A great pestilence is about to take all Italia. In Pavia they fear it — yes — as the worm-eaten oak fears the northwind.

AUDOIN. Haduwalt, Helmechis, warriors; hear thee what Narses has to say.

TRIBESMEN. Aye, chieftain.

AUDOIN [*in gayer spirits*]. Theodoric's tomb shall be my tomb. We march forward tomorrow. [*All men go to their tents except HELMECHIS*].

ALBSWINDA [*a fair girl of thirteen, dressed in simple attire of linen, with blue eyes and flaxen hair, enters, half timidly, from a curtained door to the left, and stands behind the king's chair*]. What good news does the good Narses bring?

AUDOIN. My little suckling wolf. [*Extends his arm to her, which he encircles about her*] Good news. The weaklings of Rome are eating the core of their own lives.

ALBSWINDA. What mean you, father of my father?

AUDOIN. The gray heron has spread her wings over all Italia, and sprinkled my curses upon every head.

ALBSWINDA. The gray heron can do anything, can't she? She found me in the marshes of the Danube and gave me to your Albion.

AUDOIN [*tenderly*]. You are more mine than his. You are all mine.

ALANWINDA. Did the mother heron find my father for you, son?

ARMON. She finds everything for me. She sent me Narses there. [*Points towards where Narses is sitting to HELMECHIN*] Sent him to me that I might learn the path into fair Italia.

ALANWINDA. Let's go on then, father. I am weary of the stalling of horses and men. I am tired of the clatter of iron and steel — weary unto death of all this blood and battle.

ARMON [*thoughtfully*]. There is nothing else in life.

ALANWINDA. Oh, yes, there is. Narses says so; didn't you, Narses?

NARSES [*turning around*]. Yes, child of the forest. There is much for you, but not for the old servant that has endured many changes of monarchs.

ALANWINDA. My father Albion says that he will be king of Italia someday.

ARMON [*with anger*]. Yes, when I leave it to him.

ALANWINDA. Where is my father Albion?

HELMECHIN. He has gone to get a white heron's feather so that you may conquer a hero's heart.

ALANWINDA. Freya has always had one, but

never has found a hero. She says that I must be like her, and always stay with my father.

AUDOIN. My Freya is wise like the auroch.

NARSES. A woman's wisdom is often lacking, but the fair God of the East gives her great patience and endurance that she may help to rear His children.

ALBSWINDA [*interested*]. Tell us more of thy God. He can help one to do anything, can he not?

AUDOIN. Wotan will curse thee, child, to hear you praise the Roman's God. The assassins of Cæsar but mock you.

ALBSWINDA. Yes, but He does make men good and kind. He teaches that it is wrong to murder.

AUDOIN. He has brought ruin to Italia. Think of what Rome was when they bowed unto Jupiter; she conquered all the lands touching the great seas.

NARSES [*pointing toward heaven*]. Rome's new God will some day rule the world, as her sword once did.

AUDOIN [*rises and stalks forward*]. Wotan's rule will bring peace and strength to the land of —

NARSES. To 'the land of God and Christ the redeemer.

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WOTAN (*lunging, brandishing sword*) Your
name is *Wotan* of *Yggas*.

KUNDINGA (*running over to him and catching
him*) *Wotan*! Wotan — please come with me.
I am waiting for you. — She sent me for you.

WOTAN (*with extended arm*) You — out of
my way. Follow you not —

KUNDINGA I know that the great king of the
Goths is no master for the Gepids. It seems
to me you will be a prisoner in the watch-tower of
Kundinga. There you will be taught to know of
the guiding power of a new God.

WOTAN (*glancing at her*) Already I love the God of the
Goths.

KUNDINGA (*to Wotan*) Curse on thee. [*Tear-
ing about in a great fury*] Get thee gone.
Hasten for a Hydra's brood. Already my son is
in the way to the camp of the Gepids. [*Striking
his breast*] My blood flows in Albion's veins, and
a future vein just for the blood of Kundinga.
[*Stretching his hands upward*] Wotan, Wotan,
lead on this to curse the nation of Caesar, to tear
the babes from their mothers' breasts, to burn
these houses as Nero did the Christians on their
own crosses dipped in tar. [*Exit, followed by
HELMER*].

ALBSWINDA [*tenderly*]. Fear not the hate of my father's father. When not at war he grows ugly like a wolf.

NARSES [*reclining on the floor*]. Since he is ever at war the curses of the dead are always upon him.

ALBSWINDA. A warrior's mission is far nobler than that of any other.

NARSES. No, my child, a warrior is the lowest type in God's eyes. He kills God's children.

ALBSWINDA. Isn't that funny, my good priest; to your God the great Audoin is the worst of creatures, to my God the greatest.

NARSES. Let me tell you something. Our God had a son, one who gave up his life's blood to save mankind.

ALBSWINDA. All of our sons do that.

NARSES. Yes, but before he did it he taught his fellow-men and instructed his disciples in the true life — a life without murder, without jealousy, without selfishness. He taught man to be lowly, to bear and suffer the burdens of his weaker brother. To go into all the paths of life and search for the fallen and the depraved, and bring them out of it into a bright and joyous life.

ALBSWINDA. But how are you to know when

you are good and they are bad, when they are fallen and you saved?

NARSES. By prayer, my child, your heart will gain understanding, and great wisdom will be given unto you to know the difference.

GISULP [*opening the door and standing within*]. Greetings to you, my Albswinda.

ALBSWINDA [*running to greet him*]. And to you, my old playmate. Welcome home again, Gisulp.

GISULP [*seeing the retreating form of NARSES*]. Who goes yonder?

ALBSWINDA. A messenger of the Romans.

GISULP. What business has he with the king?

ALBSWINDA. Rome will not make terms of treaty with the Lombards. They have sent soldiers to strengthen the Gepidae, so that our soldiers cannot defeat the purpose of the Romans.

GISULP. Kunimond comes hither.

AUDOIN [*enters, followed by staff*]. So, Gisulp, the enemy sent his runner ahead to warn the sentinel.

GISULP. Yes, my lord.

AUDOIN. Think you that Albion arrived at his camp too late?

GISULP. Albion went to the supply camp of the Gepidae where the prince commands.

AUDOIN. Be quick, be quick, tell me of the king's arrival.

GISULP. As I was out by yonder hill, where the river turns and dashes over the mountain, I saw a soldier following its stream until he came to the great gash in the earth's face, and then disappeared. To my loud cries he answered not, but soon I saw him clambering over the rocks, bearing a white eagle's wing, a token of peace, so I could but wait.

AUDOIN. And then?

GISULP. He said to go bear word to my king that Kunimond was on the way to pay a visit to the king of the Lombards, carrying the message himself.

AUDOIN [*the noise of armor and horse is heard*]. Kunimond is here. [*Takes his seat*]

HADUWALT [*looking out of the slit in the door, then opening the door*]. King Kunimond.

KUNIMOND [*enters, followed by soldiers*]. Audoin, king of the Lombards, greetings.

AUDOIN. Son of Wotan —'tis he.

KUNIMOND. Yes, Kunimond, king of the Gepidae.

ARON. 'Tis not oft that enemies greet one another. Thy visit must be an urgent one.

KUNIMOND. We have been a wedge between a forsaken and a chosen land these many winters. We retreat not, neither do we move ahead. A force of well armed men lie ahead; neither your men nor my men alone can take them. Behind us, soon to crush us down like beasts, come the Avars, then the Huns. There is only one thing left for us to do.

ARON. To crush the enemy.

KUNIMOND. Together.

ARON. What meanest thou?

KUNIMOND. That you and I must link our armies together in this one last battle against the Huns, and divide the spoils.

ARON [*rising, and speaking with a tone of hatred*]. Divide -- the lands? No, Kunimond, you wrong your enemy. Either you take it alone, or we take you and Rome both.

KUNIMOND. We have wasted our lives sitting on the hillsides with only waiting. The Roman forces are too strong.

ARON. When you grow weary of the way, turn aside and let us take the ground. Long have we sought you to get you out of the way. Let us

fight on until one or the other of our tribes is wiped out.

KUNIMOND. Audoin, I came bearing a kind message in my heart, I go taking with me a greater hatred than Wotan has given to man. No Lombard shall ever pass the line into Italy alive.

AUDOIN. Coward, think you that your threat weakens my purpose?

KUNIMOND. I curse the name of Lombard? I curse you, king of that people. [*Backs to the door*]

AUDOIN. Spit on, you viper. Your fang hasn't enough poison to disturb the stomach of a pigeon.

KUNIMOND. May the sacred heron yet eat your heart out of your body as you lie wounded unto death on the shores of the Danube.

AUDOIN [*with rage*]. Demon, out with you. Curses, double curses upon you, upon your child, upon the tribe of the Gepidae. Will you blaspheme and denounce the sacred emblem of our tribe? Wotan, smite him dead; send the forgers of fire and —

FREYA [*rather large, showing the strength of her race in her face, and dressed in a tunic of linen with a covering of dark wool*]. Father, peace in your own house. Strangers are ever welcome here.

Thy board is their board, thy bed their bed.
[KENTMUND goes out, followed by train.]

[ALASWINDA mutters her woes about the
mist if FAYYA is the lover with her upon
the mid-way.]

ADORN. Get thee gone — out of my sight —
all of you. [All move slowly to and out of the
door. FAYYA and ALASWINDA stand by the door
into their apartments, the curtain of which is held
by FAYYA as she looks upon her father with com-
passion, ALASWINDA with awe. In the surtuning
gloom he cannot see them.] It has come.
[Pause.] The will of the unseen is greater than
all earth's gifts. To-day we are a mighty roaring
sea pushing all before us, tomorrow but a mere
mountain brook trickling over the pebbles — a
wasted force. [Staring out of the slit in the door.]
The roses of my life are fading — too long have I
camped on the brink of fortune, never to win. My
blood and bones are old, my energy dead, the
charm of Wotan has left me. The men there are
alive to the fire within them, they are waiting for
me to send them on. I stand back — afraid, yes,
afraid of that unseen spirit that has laid the finger
of ruin on Italia. [Sobbing.] Wotan, Wotan,
help me — help.

FREYA [*coming forward to support her father*].
Rest here, father. [*Leads him to his throne chair*]
You are weary. The cares of life are many.

AUDOIN. What is life without cares? I want them. But I can no longer give my men the vigor as of old. It is here, [*strikes his breast*] but it won't come out.

FREYA. You must rest.

AUDOIN. No, child; you do not understand. You have too long been seeped in the good wine of Asgard. There is a strange mystery about this God of the Romans. It disturbs my sleep. Ask Albswinda. She knows. It comes lurking on with smiles and kisses, but in it is only the advance guard of ruin and death. See, all of Rome is being hushed to sleep by a great pestilence. It is at the gate of Pavia. It is my time to move now. Wotan has put his finger upon the hour-glass — the time has come.

FREYA. No, father; you are sick with weariness. Let us wait the return of Albion. He can lead the men on to Rome after he has captured the Gepidae.

ALBSWINDA. He will win. [*Coming forward and seating herself at AUDOIN's feet*] I saw a strange woman at the camp the other day. She

said, as soon as she saw me, that I was the daughter of Albion, the conqueror of Italia. And the race would some day mingle with all the peoples of the earth.

AUDOIN. The child wearies me.

ALBSWINDA. No, father of my father. I will be good. [*Lays her head gently on his knee*]

FREYA. The moon begins to wend her way across the sky, the hush of the bird in the marshes tells us that it is time to sleep.

AUDOIN. No sleep for me. We move forward at once. Call my men.

FREYA. Rest thyself, father.

AUDOIN [*holding feebly to the back of his throne-chair*]. No, we go. Call Helmechis.

FREYA [*looking out of the window*]. The clouds in the east foretell a stormy night. They are making a race to cover the moon's face.

AUDOIN. Listen! I hear the cry of the gray heron.

FREYA. 'Tis but the song of the men in the tents.

AUDOIN. They sing?

FREYA. Always. What else have they to do? They sing today, fight tomorrow, and then —

AUDOIN. They will sing little on this march.
We must work — yes — must work to win.

FREYA. The days of work are over. Father,
you must realize that age, white, hoary age, has
overtaken you, and your place as leader must be
given to Albion.

AUDOIN. What say you, child of my heart?
You kill me to talk thus. Let me go tonight. On-
ward with the troops. [*Standing, though totter-*
ing] I will lead them.

ALBSWINDA. Father Audoin, shall I call them
for you? [*Still holding the curtain by the door*]

AUDOIN. Call Haduwalt, child. [*Exit ALBS-*
WINDA]

FREYA. 'Tis the wine in your brain. Be quiet
and sleep tonight. With tomorrow's sun you can
be off.

HADUWALT [*entering the door of mead-hall*].
You called me, chief of the Lombards?

AUDOIN [*leaning on FREYA and taking a step*
forward]. Move the tents, load the wagons, pre-
pare the foot soldiers with ample provisions.

HADUWALT. By tomorrow's night all will be
ready.

AUDOIN [*amazed*]. No, tonight.

HADUWALT. Tonight? What mean you?

AUDOIN. There is but one time to move — the critical time, and it is now.

HADUWALT [*moving toward the door*]. If it is your bidding.

AUDOIN. Send the horsemen ahead. Leave the brood mares, the calves and colts behind in these quarters.

FREYA [*with tenderness*]. No, father; go not tonight. I pray you.

AUDOIN [*ignoring FREYA's entreaty*]. Saddle my horse. At once, I tell you.

FREYA [*with outstretched arms*]. Father.

AUDOIN. You do not understand, child, I must be obeyed. The men are restless. Get me my cuirass, spurs and helmet. My battle axe, my —
[FREYA has left the room and AUDOIN looks about perplexed]

HADUWALT [*entering abruptly*]. My lord, the men refuse to go tonight.

AUDOIN. Refuse, refuse! They know naught but obedience.

HADUWALT. In the morning all will be ready.

AUDOIN [*not to be outdone*]. Go; bid them be ready at once.

HADUWALT [*persuasively*]. From the many

times that you have broken up camp my lord, you must know that one cannot do it on a moment's notice.

AUDOIN [*shaking with rage, his hands clenched*]. Be off before I strangle you. [HADUWALT *remains motionless, looking upon AUDOIN with wonder*] Be off, I say.

[*At the unmoved figure of HADUWALT, AUDOIN makes a lurch, then, as if catching himself, stands a moment as if to reflect. Passion overcoming him, AUDOIN throws himself upon HADUWALT, grapples with him, throwing him to the floor. FREYA is just entering the door with the armor of her father, and, dropping it, runs to separate them*]

AUDOIN [*breathlessly*]. I will kill him — let me to him.

FREYA. Father, Haduwalt is thy trusted servant. He would never do ought but for your good.

HADUWALT. It is but the wine, Freya. He will sleep it off.

AUDOIN [*more composed*]. No, my son, it is not the wine. It is the last spark of fire within me. Already it is dead. [*Trembling*] I feel no longer the love of battle. [*TotTERS*]

FREYA. You must rest one night before you

march southward. [*Extending her arms toward*
AUDOIN.]

[AUDOIN *falls helpless into the arms of FREYA*
and HADUWALT, who lead him across the
room into the adjoining one, HADUWALT
stopping at the doorway]

HADUWALT. Life is but a beginning and an
ending, linked together with a song. [*The men*
have come in for further orders] Vestralp, our
chieftain is ill — we cannot go tonight. Prepare
for your march tomorrow.

[*A great clatter of hoofs is heard. The men*
stand back in awe]

HELMECHIS. Who comes thither?

FREYA [*who has just rejoined the men*]. Per-
haps, 'tis the prince, my brother — the new king.

[*The door opens, and an AVAR, with flat nose*
and high cheek bones, dressed in a skirt of
leather with a skin of the wolf covering the
left shoulder, while the right one is left bare,
and high strapped sandals are on his feet,
flings himself from his horse and enters]

THE AVAR. Friends, I come to seek peace. I
come with a message from the Chagan of the Avars.

ALL [*gazing in wonderment*]. The Lombards
make no peace.

THE AVAR. From across the Danube come the Huns. They are threatening our lands on the Ural, our very lives.

ALL. Keep them back as Rome is keeping us back.

THE AVAR. They are double us in numbers. Our king has made plans for war, but we need your help. Let not the blood of Germany be spilt by the mighty force of the Hun.

HADUWALT. What shall be our recompense?

THE AVAR. A fairer battlefield than you have ever fought upon.

HADUWALT. The fairest battlefield lies yonder beyond the Alps.

THE AVAR. Then my people will help you to win it, if now you help us.

VESTRALP. No, alone; we Lombards seek the prize alone.

FREYA. Why seekest thou thy enemy's hand when for years you have refused us aid against the Gepidae?

THE AVAR. Princess; I cannot explain the acts of my king, my people. I but bear a message to your chieftain.

HELMECHIS. We march tomorrow — southward — upon the people of Kunimond.

THE AVAR. I seek a word with your king.

A PAGAN PRIEST [*enters slowly from the curtained door to the left. His outstretched hands are covered with a towel, symbolic of death, and as he approaches, all kneel*]. King Audoin is dead.

FREYA. Unto Valhalla I commend his soul.

THE TRIBESMEN. Our king is dead. Peace unto his soul. [*All rising*] Long live Albion —
Our King.

CURTAIN

ACT II

The scene is laid among the foothills of the Julian Alps. In the foreground are the tents of the Lombards. The men are sitting in groups, mending their armor and straps. In the distance the mountains roll one beyond the other, showing the beauty and wondrous verdure of the lands of Italy toward which they are struggling.

HADUWALT. Perhaps the king returns today?

VESTRALP. How do you know so much, you curser of women?

HADUWALT [*laughing*]. Anything but that, good brother. I curse because there are no women.

VESTRALP. So say you; ha, ha!

GISULP. Haduwalt speaks the truth. [*Rising, shows a shield that he has been fixing*] Women shun us sons of Wotan as if we were snakes. Our own sisters who wait beyond the Danube pray for us, while our fair daughters of Italy run from us to pray to their God for protection against us.

VESTRALP. It is wise that they should, for who

WANTS A BLACK-EYED, BLACK-EYED wife to bring
BLACK-EYED MEN INTO THE WORLD?

GENTLE [*admiring his armor*]. Their eyes shine
with the same lustre as their armor.

HADUWALT [*snapping a sword that he is sword-
ing*]. Black-eyed sea birds they are fair to see,
but what wives are they compared to the fair
daughters of WOGAT?

GENTLE. We train our women to be drudges,
to do the work of the Greek slaves, but the Roman
trains his women to be companions of his heart and
life.

VESTRALP. Get thee a wife from the lary hordes
if you want to spend the rest of your life washing
your children's faces.

HADUWALT. The Roman women no longer bear
sons, and so Rome must appeal to us Germans to
fill her armies.

GENTLE. Rome's force is spent, 'tis true, but
after war comes love. All day and night is spent
in dreaming of war and talking of love.

VESTRALP. Ha, ha! Love-sick youth.

HADUWALT [*trying on his leather leggings*].
The last weary march wore my boots to the uppers.
Had I now but a wife to make me a pair from the

skin of that wild boar that Gisulp brought home the other day!

GISULP. Would you have her adorn them with the gold you stole from the old bishop who passed a night in your tent three days ago, as he was on his way to convert the Avars?

HADUWALT [*casting an ugly eye toward the speaker*]. Better I take it than a flat-nosed Hun. It is to buy a skin of Siculian wine which you love so well.

VESTRALP. Why buy wine when — [*The call of the auroch's horn startles them, and they rise from their seats on the ground*]

GISULP [*running up the steps to the top of the ledge*]. He comes, he comes. The king.

TRIBESMEN [*all rising*]. The king comes. King Albion!

[ALBION appears suddenly from over the ledge just behind the tents. On his bare, left arm he carries a small round shield, painted red, the centre of which bears a golden wheel without spokes — a Runic character of the sun. On his right arm he wears broad, gold bracelets; his breast is protected by a well-wrought cuirass. The

upper part of the legs is covered with short leather breeches, while from the knees to the ankles the bare calves are laced around with leather straps. On his feet are high and well-fitting sandals, on the left one is a spur. A short battle axe is thrust in his belt, a wolf skin hangs from his shoulders, and from the Roman helmet — won from the enemy — rises, instead of a Latin crest of black horsehair, the pinions of his beloved gray heron]

ALBION. Comrades all — I salute you.

TRIBESMEN [*bowing toward ALBION*]. We welcome our king home.

GISULP. What news, my uncle?

ALBION [*descending the steps*]. It is well, my lad. Good news, good. I have made peace with the Avars.

HADUWALT. On what terms?

ALBION. Good terms, brother. You will be pleased.

VESTRALP. Yes, if they help us to make a good fight.

ALBION. Little Vestralp, you were born fighting.

VESTRALP. My king, I want to die fighting.

GISULP. Let us get at it at once. I like not this land where diseases spring up in a night and leave a train of dead in their wake.

ALBION. What mean you, my boy?

GISULP. The pestilence of Italy has come to our camp and killed a hundred and sixty-three of our best horses.

ALBION. Better a hundred and sixty-three horses than a hundred and sixty-three men.

HADUWALT. We are too tough skinned to get the diseases that float around in the air. If we wait here long enough we will not have to fight — all of Italia's fair sons will die off.

HELMECHIS [*coming down the steps and carrying helmets, saddles, etc. He is dusty and fatigued from the long ride*]. They are already dead. A ride of three days has not revealed a living soul to us.

VESTRALP. Is that the good news then, my king?

ALBION. No, my brother, we have made terms with the Avars.

HADUWALT. How, my lord?

ALBION. If they lend us their aid against the old enemy, the Gepidae, half of the spoils shall be theirs and all their lands. Then, too, if we suc-

ceed in gaining the lands of the Po they shall have all of Pannonia for them and theirs.

TRIBESMEN. Good, good! It shall be for them and theirs.

HELMECHIS. And Gisulp, my son, you shall have all the brood mares to raise an army of horses fit to excel the triumphal march of Cæsar.

VESTRALP. And what are we to have — we who have spent our blood on the battle-field?

ALBION. What more does a soldier want than battle? Are you not content with that? Get thee gone — all. [*Waving his hand*] I want to rest from the long journey.

HADUWALT. When do we march, fair son of Wotan?

ALBION. Get thee ready. The gray heron mother will give us the bidding. She has never failed us. [*All retreat from the stage*]

GISULP [*lingering upon the step*]. We shall all be ready when you awake.

ALBION. One sleeps long after a ride of two moons and a sun. [*Waves his hand at GISULP as the latter disappears over the ledge. He walks over wearily to his tent and stands a moment at the opening*] My eyes close from the weary days, but my heart beats with all the fervor within me.

It was worth it all just to have seen fair Rosamond but once. [*Laughs mockingly*] She has lived with me every moment since, she will live every hour with me in the future when my people are her people, when her father's people are no more. [*Enters tent and the end of the Traveler's Song is heard*].

"I wandered through the night as does the moon —

Wandered of my heart's beloved in search;
I found but death, mocking with cruel doom,
For today's day seems to be a year to me."

ROSAMOND [*accompanied by GAMBARA, appears slowly above the ledge of rock. Looking around*]. There is no one here, my cousin, not even a guard of whom we might ask a cup of water.

GAMBARA. Perhaps it is mess-time, fair Rosamond, and they are eating in the large camp yonder.

ROSAMOND [*descending the steps*]. Thinkest thou that the young king has returned?

GAMBARA. Let us hope that he has. [*Sighs*].

ROSAMOND. I grow weary.

GAMBARA. Sit thee down here, my child. [*Motioning her to a low stump near the steps*].

ROSAMOND. 'Tis with great fear that I come

here to the camp of my father's enemy. Ah, cousin, what perils my father has encountered in the last year. He has grown aged with the worry and suspense of war.

GAMBARA. Thy father's life is thy life, I know, but the sun shines high in the heavens as yet for him. Soon he will be able to march beyond the Alps.

ROSAMOND. Albion will never let us. I fear him as the bird fears the hawk. He is spreading his wings further and further with the lengthening days of spring.

GAMBARA. Ah, but when they touch the lands of the Gepidae they will be singed.

ROSAMOND. He is fair — this noble son of Audoin.

GAMBARA. How thinkest thou so, fair Rosamond?

ROSAMOND. The night that I encountered him horseback near our camp I did all but faint.

GAMBARA. Then thou didst fear him?

ROSAMOND. No, I felt that I could climb upon the back of his steed and ride away to the land of No-where.

GAMBARA. Remember that he is a vulture, wait-

ing to tear the heart out of your father, your people and — yourself.

ROSAMOND [*with alarm*]. That is why I have come — to ask for mercy. He is of our race, of our god; he cannot let us fall into the hands of the Avars.

GAMBARA. Why does he go on long journeys to their lands, why does he feast with their king, drink from their wassail bowl? [*Becoming angry*] Thou didst never see Elfrieda, the beautiful daughter of the pagan Avars?

ROSAMOND. No, my cousin, nor do I want to. I hate her.

GAMBARA. So do I. These people — [*Looks about with mistrust*]

ROSAMOND. I had a dream last night, good Gambara, and it weighs heavily upon my mind.

GAMBARA. Dreams are messengers from Wotan. What was it, my child?

ROSAMOND. I was walking among the reeds of the bank of that small stream to the left of our camp — very near the spot where I first saw Albion — when I found a falcon, strong, beautiful, and wild. I took it in my arms, held it close to my heart and petted it. It seemed so near to me, to my life.

GAMBARA. And?

ROSAMOND. And there as I sat content, watching the clouds in the blue sky float lazily southward, its heart beating close to my heart, two great eagles came and snatched the falcon away.

GAMBARA. Then thou shall be happy. Thou shalt soon marry a noble prince whom thou wilt love dearly.

ROSAMOND. But will someone take him away from me?

GAMBARA. Why thinkest thou that?

ROSAMOND. What is the meaning of the two eagles that took my falcon?

GAMBARA. Someone is coming. [*The voice of ALBION is heard as he sings a strain of his favorite Traveler's Song*]

ROSAMOND [*with emotion*]. 'Tis his voice.

[*The flap of ALBION's tent is thrown back, and he steps forth without armor or helmet; he stares for a moment, then reaches out to a projecting rope to support him*]

ALBION. Rosamond.

ROSAMOND [*proudly*]. I am the daughter-queen of the Gepidae.

ALBION [*advancing with keen interest*]. So see

I, fair daughter of Kunimond. How fares it with his grace, the king?

ROSAMOND. You ask this question as if my father were your friend instead of your foe.

[GAMBARA *slips away*].

ALBION [*lightly*]. Enemy in war, friend in love.

ROSAMOND. You have hounded him for years, you have made him old long before his time, you have made friends with the most bitter foe that ever threatened a tribe of Wotan.

ALBION. I beseech your pardon, proud daughter of a proud father, if I am guilty of any of these charges.

ROSAMOND. Can you deny this? Your journeys have been many as have been your intrigues. The eastwinds have blown the dust of your numerous marches our way to cover the tents by which we have traced ruin with our finger tips. [*More softly*] Have pity on your brethren, on my father — on myself.

ALBION [*approaching*]. On you, fair child, no wrong would I do. You may have my life, my love.

ROSAMOND [*drawing back*]. Your love?

ALBION. Yes.

ROSAMOND. You play with me. You do not respect my mission.

ALBION [*intently*]. Respect it? More than I can tell you. Has it not brought you hither, has it not brought you to me?

ROSAMOND. If you care then so much will you not grant me one wish?

ALBION. And that is?

ROSAMOND. Is? Do you not know, can you not guess?

ALBION. I have only one thought, and that is — you.

ROSAMOND. As long as you are an enemy of the Gepidae — of my father, you must not speak thus to me.

ALBION [*tenderly*]. Rosamond — come with me.

ROSAMOND [*drawing away*]. When you have broken that treaty with the Avars, the Gepidae will join heart and sword with the Lombards.

ALBION. Not heart and sword, but heart and heart. Come — [*Offers to take her hand*]

ROSAMOND [*angrily*]. Do not take today that which you will throw away tomorrow.

ALBION. Enemies in war, but friends in love, I

say. Do you not know, fair daughter of Kuni-mond, that the first spark of life in man, that sets him to doing and living is war, the second is love? Can you expect to make him over? You who have been born as I among the clatter of sword and shield, fed upon the flesh of the wild bird so that every fiber of your being thirsts anew with the rising sun of each day to seek the spoil of your own hand. Peace with your father would mean death to my life and purpose. For many years we have striven for the fields of fair Italia, and I mean to enter there, not with the aid of the Gepidae, but with the curses of their dead souls. I want to hear them spit and rave, just as I love to hear the last gurgle of the dying dragon that I have left to die in the marshes. I —

ROSAMOND [*with intensity*]. Oh, no, Albion. You are not so cruel. We are not here to tear out the hearts of men as if they were instruments of warfare. A mother has borne each one, a mother's love watches over everyone alike.

ALBSWINDA [*her voice is heard in the distance*]. Father, father Albion.

ROSAMOND. Someone comes. [*Shuddering*]
A voice of a child.

ALBSWINDA [*from the top of the ledge*]. Gisulp said true, you have come home. [*Running down the steps, she embraces him*].

ALBION [*stroking her hair*]. Yes, child, hours have I been home, and you are late in finding it out. This is Rosamond, the daughter of the Gepidae.

ROSAMOND [*stretching out her arms to ALBSWINDA*]. Child of Albion, I greet thee tenderly.

ALBSWINDA. Did father bring you to me? I love you.

ALBION. As does your father, Albswinda.

ROSAMOND. I came with my cousin to seek peace with your father. These are troublesome times, my child, for you and me.

ALBION. Take fair Rosamond to your aunt, Albswinda. Let her there rest and feast for a weary march she must have endured to come so far.

ROSAMOND. Not a weary one, my lord, if you but grant my wish.

ALBION. And is it thy father's wish?

ROSAMOND. Not yet. He does not know of my coming. If first I have your promise I shall work hard to get his. [ALBSWINDA *is leading her out to the left*]

ALBION. You have my heart; is that not enough?

ROSAMOND. My first duty is to my tribe. Swear that you will not join forces with the enemy to kill them.

ALBION [*with emphasis*]. I swear not to kill the tribe. [ROSAMOND, *content, disappears behind the tents*] But I will join forces with them myself, joy of my heart. The son of Audoin must win.

GISULP [*appearing at the top of the steps. The clatter of hoofs, the clash of steel, and the tramp of men are heard*]. Uncle, the men are coming. Your soldiers must have ridden fast so nearly to beat your arrival.

ALBION. You speak true, my boy. Wild, impetuous, these hounds of the forest tear the earth up as they go. I was but a day ahead of them. They were left to break up camp.

GISULP. Then they ride better than the king.

ALBION [*laughing*]. I rode out of my way.

GISULP. I hope that it well paid you.

ALBION. I wished to pass the camp of the Gepidae.

GISULP. To see that their forces were equal to ours?

ALBION [*climbs the steps to look at the approaching army*]. Narses returns with them; he is leading them.

[*The soldiers, covered with dust, file down the steps, led by NARSES and drop upon the ground with their loads*]

NARSES. My young king, I greet thee.

ALBION. Sit thee down, my good man. Have you traveled far?

NARSES. Farther than I wish. I am old and men's struggles tire me more than a long march. Loading up the heart is a more difficult task than loading up one's back.

ALBION. Bring thee a message of peace from thy people?

NARSES. Why do you ask for peace? There was no peace with your father. He was born of the tribe of the devil.

GISULP. Put this old man away, uncle. He blasphemes the dead of Wotan.

NARSES. Where do you come from, you whelp of Satan?

ALBION [*GISULP starts as if to choke the old man*]. No, my child, respect his age.

GISULP. I will hear no more of him. Bid him begone.

NARSES. I am accustomed, my boy, to the abuses of mankind. I have spent a long life bringing peace to men's souls. I will pray for you.

ALBION. Mind him not, father; his rash youth knows no bound. [*Addressing a servant*] Get food and wine for the Roman. His way has been long.

[*The soldiers are piling their armor, shields and saddles at the door of the tent as they take one piece after another from their bodies*]

GISULP. Feed the men first, uncle.

ALBION. A feast awaits you, my warriors. The fattest calf, the choicest swine are broiling on the coals for two hours or more. Helmechis has warned them in advance of your hungry stomachs.

ALBSWINDA [*the men are filing out behind the tents, when ALBSWINDA enters from the left and crosses over to the right with plate and cup in hand. Handing them to NARSES*]. Hearty greetings to God's servant.

ALBION [*hesitating a moment by the tent, GISULP stands by the steps, looking with anger upon his cousin*]. I will leave you to her, Narses. She has been looking for your return these many

Sanford

dear Narses, that he ruled over the kingdom of fire.

NARSES. That kingdom is in yourself. When you have done wrong does not your conscience burn you?

ALBSWINDA. Yes, father.

NARSES. Then that is God overcoming the devil.

ALBSWINDA. How can you tell when he has been overcome?

NARSES. When you make up your mind never to do wrong again. [*Raising his finger reverently*] Then the devil has been outwitted by God.

ALBSWINDA. What is the meaning of wrong, father of the Romans?

NARSES. I am a Roman, yes, fair child, the son of the greatest people that God ever created, but I have been hounded, exiled, driven into the wilds like a dog because I chose to tell my good emperor his duty toward man. To give one's soul and life [*eats as if hungry*] to help advance the ambitious whims of a master and then receive only a kick in return.

ALBSWINDA. Then I have never done wrong, because I have never been driven into the woods and hunted like a dog.

NARSES. You do not understand, child. [*Raising two fingers toward heaven*] God grant thee wisdom when trouble comes to thee, when thy heart burns with the fever of repentance pray to our Christian God and he will comfort thee.

ALBSWINDA. Hast thou that great comfort then?

NARSES. Even though the servant of God hast cast me out, even though the wild boar chase me and the hungry wolf would make his dinner of my old bones I walk the lonely paths of these forests, singing because God is in my heart, his strength gives me courage.

ALBSWINDA [*testing him. Laughing*]. You talk very queerly, father Narses. Ha! ha! I like not your God if He is in the heart of every Roman. They are cowards, murderers, thieves.

NARSES. Why say you so, my Albswinda?

ALBSWINDA. Have they not stolen our lands, hounded my people for centuries; have they not killed our men by thousands, tried to drown us in the North Sea? They are not human as you say; they are not good enough to be called dogs, let alone men.

NARSES. You, too, have some of the fire of your people. Calm yourself, child. Forgiveness

is the first law of our God. Our people have much yet to learn, but they are no longer the cruel hounds of war that they were under Cæsar. War is the spear of Satan. He is not satisfied to kill off one by one, he must stir them up to fight so that his victims may be numbered by the thousands.

ALBSWINDA. But every man who dies in war has a place by the throne of Wotan in the hall of the Valhalla. There it is ever joyous. Is it so by the throne of God?

NARSES. The followers of Wotan are all heretics, heretics, my child. Know thee not that Christ was the Savior of mankind? He came to teach the world that human existence was precious, that everyone should spend his life ennobling his fellow-man, that the years on this earth are a constant struggle toward His Kingdom, and can be earned only by doing some good each day.

ALBSWINDA. Good! Good! How strange it all is.

[ELFRIEDA, *the daughter of the Avars, dressed in a tunic of leather with a skin of a tiger thrown over her shoulder, with high strapped sandals on her feet and a javelin in her hand, is seen coming over the*

ledge of the rock. Seeing the two figures in close conversation she slips behind a tree to listen]

NARSES. Yes, my child. The word good means God. Each day must man labor to overthrow the work of the devil, and your great mission in life is to teach this tribe that way.

ALBSWINDA [*with childish innocence*]. Me.

NARSES [*rising and holding up a small cross that he has just taken from his breast*]. In this sign Constantine conquered Rome, in this sign your people shall learn to know that the law of my God is the law of happiness.

ALBSWINDA [*falling on her knees before NARSES, with hands uplifted*]. Our God, our Father.

NARSES. May God bless thee.

ALBSWINDA. And thee, too, my noble father.

NARSES [*kissing the cross, and reaching down to have her do likewise*]. Do you promise to take this into the hearts of your people, to convert them from the love of warfare, to teach each and everyone that the Christian way is the only way?

ALBSWINDA. I will.

NARSES. To thee [*handing her the cross*] I give the key to God's chosen land. Know that

the way is long and wearisome, the path strewn with discouragements.

ALBSWINDA [*pressing the cross to her heart*]. Though the way be weary, father, I will lead my people His way — the right way.

NARSES [*pointing to the sinking sun over Italy*]. That way shall be your way. The chosen land of Italy needs the blood of a new race to continue her great work of the world's civilization. Lead them thither.

ALBSWINDA [*holding up the cross*]. Into Italy.

NARSES [*crossing himself*]. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

ALBSWINDA [*crossing herself*]. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

[NARSES *goes out*; ALBSWINDA *stands in thought as ELFRIEDA steps out from her hiding place and looks upon her*]

ELFRIEDA. No, no, my child. Put away such heathen thought. The old man totters with age in mind as well as in body.

ALBSWINDA. Who — who are you?

ELFRIEDA. I come from far away, carrying a message from the chagan of the Avars to the king of the Lombards.

ALBSWINDA. To my father?

ELFRIEDA [*in surprise*]. Is he your father? The great king — Albion? What right then have you to listen to that impostor?

ALBSWINDA. The good Narses?

ELFRIEDA. Call him what you like. His kind have worn our camps out by nights, to men already weary from the day's fighting, preaching to them of civilization. There is no state of civilization; men only mistake it for a period of peace. Life progresses only when in uproar, in battle, in preserving the life of their nation. Show me what Rome has done since she has been seeped in the culture of the East, and I can show you ten to one more things, original and lasting, that she did when inspired by Jupiter.

ALBSWINDA. What proof have you — child of the Avars?

ELFRIEDA. Did not my father send me to school in Athens, then to Rome. Did I not mock them in their shams, their imitations. What became of Greece when she began to imitate the works of the great men of the age of Pericles? What is Rome doing now? Merely feigning great things while the very core of her people is being eaten out by the vices of the East. They come

like a great flock of vultures upon the body of the dead; it is easy to persuade a mind already weakened by disease.

ALBSWINDA. I know not why you talk thus to me.

ELFRIEDA. I am trying to save you from destruction.

ALBSWINDA. Me? Why—I am trying to save my people from the same thing.

ELFRIEDA. Yes, but for what? Your people and my people, barbarians though they are, are the strong men that Wotan made them, not weakened by wine and licentious living. Save them for the generations to come. They will need our men to be the fathers and us women to be the mothers for new nations in the West. Civilization is nothing more than license to carry on destruction already started by Alexander and Cæsar.

ALBSWINDA. But my father? You have a message to my father. [*Runs to tent, calling*] Father, Father Albion. Someone awaits Father Albion.

ALBION [*coming out of tent*]. Me? Am I wanted?

ALBSWINDA. Yes, a daughter of the Avars bears a message to my father. [*Enters tent*]

ELFRIEDA [*from across the foreground*]. The great Albion. I carry you a message from my father, the chagan.

ALBION. This is not his daughter, Elfrieda.

ELFRIEDA. It is.

ALBION. They told me much of you when I was in your father's camp — of your childhood — your wisdom — your long visit among the Romans.

ELFRIEDA. I am no longer the child my people think me. Ten years among the weak nations of Greece and Rome have made me come here to warn you against taking your people into their midst. Under the disguise of religion, civilization, of culture Rome is engulfed in vice. Could it be otherwise? The German nations that have already preceded you into the southern lands are passing — dying by the thousands. Life is a hard school, it must be gained by degrees, by slow steps so that when the goal is reached every muscle, nerve and brain tissue is prepared for the change. Was it so with first conquerors of Rome? No, the conquest was sudden, but the fall by disease, drunkenness and women told in a few short years when Rome regained their territory. My father is on

his way to join you to go there to destroy your nation and ours.

ALBION. Is it good news that you bring then?

ELFRIEDA. No, no, I beg of you not to go. Save the bodies of our good barbarians and the bodies will save the minds for the generations to come.

ALBION. What say you? Men would make compacts, but women break them. Is it always so? Women cry against war — yet bear sons to fight on.

ELFRIEDA. No! No! I cry not against war, my father's friend. War with men is right, but not with cowards, dullards, remnants of great warriors, that is not a test for an Avar or a Lombard.

ALBION. You talk like a soldier. [*The sound of the auroch's horn is heard*] Listen. Who comes?

ELFRIEDA. The Avars. My father sent them to join you.

ALBION. But why then this message of despair?

ELFRIEDA. I want to save you and my father, because in saving you I'll save great nations to conquer the great West.

ALBION. That, too, is my dream. [*Waving his hand toward the tents*] The back of the Gepidae is broken.

ELFRIEDA. Then my journey is without result, is it, my king of the Lombards?

ALBION. To no dishonor to so beautiful a queen, it is.

ELFRIEDA [*waiting for the sound of the horn to cease*]. I bear you another message, then my king. Before a son is born to you to bear your name, the white-livered Romans will poison you.

ALBION [*laughing*]. With the fear of their God?

ELFRIEDA. No, their religion is harmless, it is the curse of the body that no barbarian can withstand.

[*The clash of the soldiers' armors and their marching bring the women and warriors out of the tents*]

ALBION. My dear Elfrieda, then your brothers go with me. We die together.

ROSAMOND [*to GAMBARA*]. It is Elfrieda. What dost she here?

ALBION [*with a jest*]. She bears me a message not to go, to beware of the Romans who will poison me. Ha! ha! ha!

ELFRIEDA. Yes, so say I. For you stand as one for your whole tribe. When I say poison I do not mean a mere weed that sickens you unto death in an hour, but one that shoots stem and root into your body to eat out the good, leaving only the rotten in its place.

ROSAMOND. What right have you to talk thus when your father's army doth approach?

ELFRIEDA. I wanted to save my people. My father would not listen, but King Albion shall.

ROSAMOND. No, he goes and I go with him.

ALBION [*crossing hurriedly to her side*]. To Rome, my Rosamond.

ELFRIEDA [*running up the steps to where her father's soldiers are, jumps upon a horse and cries*]. To Rome, my brothers — to civilization and death.

CURTAIN

ACT III

A view of the mountains of Northern Italy, south of the Danube, where the Gepidae have camped for several years. Here they have awaited the opportunity of marching into Italy, keeping at bay the army of the Lombards on the north bank of the Danube. Their camp-house, made of upright logs with the skins of the roof stretched over the edge and nailed at irregular places, is situated on the right hand side.

SENTINEL [*walking up and down*]. Who comes?

ALBION [*appearing suddenly from the woods*]. Albion, king of the Lombards.

SENTINEL [*bowing*]. King Albion.

ALBION. Is your mistress, the queen, within?

SENTINEL. Aye, my lord. [*Disappears*]

ROSAMOND [*bursting out of the door, and running to ALBION*]. Albion, Albion! Greetings!

ALBION. My Rosamond. [*Encircling her in his arms*]

ROSAMOND. The days have been long and many since I saw you.

ALBION. Think that I have not kept count?

ROSAMOND. I have counted the hours and the minutes until this day.

ALBION. And yet when I kept you a prisoner at my camp you did but cry and weep for your father.

ROSAMOND. Well, but I had run away without telling him. As he always feared for my safety, I knew that, finding me gone, he would hunt marshes and woods until weary.

ALBION. Hast thou told him?

ROSAMOND [*wistfully*]. Of what?

ALBION. That you are to become a Lombard, my wife.

ROSAMOND. I dared not.

ALBION. And why?

ROSAMOND. A messenger had preceded me with the news that you had made a treaty with the Avars.

ALBION. And?

ROSAMOND. All the wrath of the gods of the Valhalla were called down upon you. He swore that you had kept the vile oath of your father; that you had desecrated every honorable rule of

Wotan's code; that all the true and brave Lombards were dead.

ALBION [*drawing his arm about her*]. Perhaps.

ROSAMOND. No, my fair god, say not so — be the hero of my dreams, a true son of Asgard.

ALBION. Every hour of my life is spent in serving Asgard and you, fair one.

ROSAMOND. Then break the cruel compact with our enemy.

ALBION. Listen. My father, my father's father, his father's father, spent their lives fighting to gain a road that would lead them into a chosen land. Each one won the point for a few hundred miles, each one gave his life, hard-earned, to pass it on to his son. Now it is my turn. I must serve my fathers well.

ROSAMOND [*pulling away*]. Then you love me not; 'tis but the lands, the spoils, the open way that makes you seek my hand.

ALBION. If we gain Italy, the land your father is striving to conquer, but unable to do so alone, why can we not give this land here of Pannonia, a discarded one, to the Avars?

ROSAMOND. Why serve them at all?

ALBION. Your father's forces are spent, mine

are nearly so, therefore we need supplies in men, food, horses, and armor to go on — on together.

ROSAMOND. To go — on together. [*Pensive*] Then through your love for me you hope to gain that which your sword fails to win.

ALBION. By the gray heron, yes. You and I are children of kings for the same purpose. Let our love unite our armies as well as our own lives.

ROSAMOND. But the Avars — what can they unite?

ALBION. They will furnish the solder for the welding.

ROSAMOND [*drawing away coldly*]. My father will never give unto you.

ALBION. But my Rosamond will.

ROSAMOND. Your Rosamond?

ALBION [*with his arms about her*]. Today shall be our wedding day.

ROSAMOND. Sh! he comes. [*Voices are heard*]

KUNIMOND [*stepping out of the door*]. My child, thee forgettest thy father of late — oh! a stranger?

ROSAMOND. Yes, my father.

KUNIMOND. From where?

ALBION. A day's travel northward.

KUNIMOND [*suspiciously*]. Not from the enemy's line?

ROSAMOND. Albion, father. The Lombard king.

KUNIMOND [*drawing back, his hand over his eyes*]. Away, away. The curse of Wotan is upon you.

ALBION. I come with a truce of peace.
[ROSAMOND *slips away*]

KUNIMOND. There can be no peace now between Lombard and Gepidae. Once I had dreamed of such, but your dead father killed the last hope.

ALBION. I come to make a compact with you then.

KUNIMOND. A compact with the slayer of my son! You jest.

ALBION. The years that have kept us behind the mountains there would have made us all rich on Italy's store.

KUNIMOND. Give you a share of the blood-stained gold, stained by my own people.

ALBION. And mine.

KUNIMOND. The curse of Wotan upon you.
[*Rising*] You do not merit the name of a soldier of the Val-father.

ALBION. Because I fight too well, eh?

KUNIMOND. What do you know of war — only to make compacts with someone else to do the fighting.

ALBION. You shall suffer for that, by Zio.

KUNIMOND. I see that the wine of the war-god has but intoxicated you.

ALBION. One paw of the she-wolf is already on Italy.

KUNIMOND. And I shall plant the other three there.

ALBION. With the help of the sons of the Lombards.

KUNIMOND [*becoming infuriated*]. You white cats — do you think that the sons of the Gepidae need your aid? Get thee hence, out of my sight before I strangle you. There was but one warrior among you Lombards and that was your father, Audoin. When he died the strength of Wotan died with him — now but a pack of cowards remain.

ALBION [*trying to calm himself*]. What say you! I challenge you now to the test.

KUNIMOND. But yesterday did I receive the news of the treaty that you made with the Avars — heretics — by which you promise to give these

lands here, to them if they help you to wipe us out, in order that you may cross the mountains yonder into the fair lands of the Po.

ALBION. So I did, but today I come at the bidding of your fair daughter, Rosamond, to join you in that conquest and to ask for the hand of Rosamond.

KUNIMOND [*with intense anger*]. By Frigga's girdle, no. We are sons of Asgard, true to the marrow. Fighting born and fighting to die. [*Grapples with ALBION*] I will kill you as you killed my son. Coward. Imp of my life-long foe, to death will I send you.

ROSAMOND [*appearing in the doorway*]. Father, what mean you? No son of Wotan fights with his guests. [*Separating them*] Thou shalt not.

ALBION. Fair Rosamond, you have saved him this time, but another will come.

ROSAMOND. My father is sacred to me, Albion. If you would prove all you have said to me, guard his life as a token of its truth.

KUNIMOND [*adjusting his cap and sandals. Angrily*]. Even the curses of Rome have fallen upon my child. White livered — [*Enters camp-house, sulking*]

ALBION. It is of no use; he is one of the fathers.

ROSAMOND [*pulling a long, white wool cape over her blue linen dress, bordered with swansdown*]. I grant that he is, for he is born of the heart of the white eagle on the cliffs of the Baltic. [*Sorrowfully*] But the courage of Asgard is passing.

ALBION. Too many Romans among us. They weaken us with their foolish tales of eternal punishment.

ROSAMOND. Let us talk no more of war — I am weary of it.

ALBION. You forget that life has no other charms for a warrior.

ROSAMOND. And for a lover?

ALBION [*forgetting the affair*]. Today is our wedding day.

ROSAMOND [*running up to him*]. Father forbids.

ALBION [*slipping his arm about her*]. Forbids. Let us hope — I have counted the moons on yonder Alps until it seems all too long until this day.

ROSAMOND. Why so, my Albion?

ALBION. I heard the heron mother call three

times from yonder marsh as I rode thither to hear your voice in the night.

ROSAMOND. My voice in the night? Why, I sleep.

ALBION. I have heard you sing oft the songs that every son of Asgard loves to hear, the same songs that our mothers sang us to sleep with.

ROSAMOND [*pulling herself away and laughing*]. Did I sing so loud that my voice could reach the river beyond?

ALBION. Sometimes I crept on hands and knees to your tent that your voice might sound all the clearer.

ROSAMOND [*with a jesting finger*]. Gambara sings beautifully.

ALBION. But not like my Rosamond. I know her voice well, but it lacks the depth and tenderness of the one who comes today to be the queen of the Lombards.

ROSAMOND [*shudders as if pained*]. Today?

ALBION [*taking her in his arms*]. Why, my Rosamond, why do you shudder? This is the happiest of days.

ROSAMOND. I have a strange forboding.

ALBION. But my love?

ROSAMOND. All my life I have been taught to

hate you and your tribe with an eternal hatred. I have feared every one of you as I have the poisonous venom of the serpent. To speak to one of the Lombards was to receive the sting of the adder — which meant death.

ALBION [*laughing heartily*]. And now you are to be mine — come to our tribe as a true daughter of Wotan.

ROSAMOND. But he may curse me for it. It is against my father's wishes.

ALBION. But now thy husband's wishes are to be first. Listen. [*The auroch's horn is heard*] My men are coming. I have promised them great joy today with all the mead they can drink.

ROSAMOND [*in a repenting tone*]. The mead-hall shall ring today with the voice of Lombard and the voice of the Gepidae.

ALBION. Are they not all the children of Wotan? I have brought thee a branch of red heather as a token of approval from the dead of the northern forests.

ROSAMOND [*kissing it*]. The red heather grows but from the heart of my people whose souls have joined the ranks of the mighty of the Valhalla. Wotan will bless us.

ALBION [*embracing her*]. *The men file in from*

the forests near by. FREYA and ALBSWINDA follow; GAMBARA stands at the open door of the camp house while ALBION and ROSAMOND move to one side to greet them]. Welcome my sons of Audoin, welcome all.

HADUWALT. The sons of the war-god, Zio, bring you their blessing, my king.

VESTRALP. I bring you more than blessings, brave Albion, a hope that the name of our people shall never be lost.

ALBION. How so, Vestralp?

VESTRALP. That Albion's son shall one day rule the world.

SOLDIERS [*together*]. Aye, aye, a son to Albion.

HELMECHIS. I have saved the armour of our king for him — the one Albion first wore.

GISULP. Yes, my uncle, we bring you great joy this day. [*Standing out to the right*] Greet brave Albion, my brothers.

SOLDIERS [*all*]. Albion, the first king of Italy.

ALBION [*taking the hand of ROSAMOND*]. And her first queen, Rosamond. Daughter of the Gepidae, we welcome you to the throne of the Lombards.

ROSAMOND. Good Vestralp and brothers, to-day the sword of the tribes of the sons of Wotan are melted into one.

GISULP. Well said, my queen. [*Presenting ROSAMOND with a sword*] This has been welded from the hammer of Thor. But yester day did I draw it from the breast of a dead Roman.

ROSAMOND [*symbolic of the marriage ceremony of the old Teutonic people. Extending the sword to ALBION*]. As this conquered one Roman, so shall it many. With it I give you my heart and life, dear Albion.

ALBION [*receiving it graciously*]. More's the welcome. [*Brandishing it in the air*] It shall win for me the kingdom of Romulus as it has won the fairest daughter of Wotan.

ALBSWINDA. Remember the Romans have souls, too, father. God counts his dead and punishes the murderer accordingly.

FREYA [*seeing the angered look of ALBION*]. Albion, forgive thy child.

ALBION. Yes, Freya, 'tis but the poisonous waters of the marsh.

ALBSWINDA. No, my father, I speak the truth. The Roman god is my God, and He is a just God.

ALBION. Freya, bring my daughter into the hall, she is weary. A little wine will give her strength.

[FREYA *leads* ALBSWINDA *to the door of the camp-house*]

ROSAMOND [*taking* ALBSWINDA'S *hand*] Child of my heart, enter into my father's house, as into my life — henceforth it is mother and daughter.

ALBSWINDA. I want thee, fair queen-mother, to teach my father to hate war. All the strength of our people has near been spent trying to kill their own brothers — we are all children of God. [*They enter mead-hall together, followed by* FREYA *and* GAMBARA]

ALBION [*standing by the side of the hall*]. Comrades, today a great wound has been healed, the life-long hatred between brothers of Wotan, and it needs but time to let the scar grow smooth and firm. In a few more months the Alps will sink away as our feet nimbly tread the paths worn bare by the Romans. For a thousand years has Jupiter led his sons proudly across these ways, triumphant. Now 'tis Wotan's turn. The unnumbered hordes of the Baltic have been pressing down upon the works of the Romans for five centuries, sometimes to win, sometimes to lose, but

never to lose again. Asgard but needs your loyal support. Are you with your king?

TRIBESMEN. Aye, aye, Albion. We are all with our king.

ALBION [*waving the sword in the air*]. By this the gates of Hell shall be opened to let the souls of the Romans within.

TRIBESMEN. Well said, my kinsman and our king. [ALBION *salutes and enters mead-hall. The soldiers stand about in groups in great confusion that the joyous wedding day has brought to them*]

ALBSWINDA [*suddenly appearing in the doorway, slips in unobserved. Stamping her foot*]. Sons of Wotan, I command you.

TRIBESMEN [*looking around toward the mead-hall*]. Yes, princess.

ALBSWINDA. My father has just inspired you with a great love for warfare. I am here on the part of a greater Father to cry against a heathenish practice. As brothers and sisters in a family that weep and wail over the dead, so should we in this great world-family do the same.

HADUWALT. The Romans cry peace unto souls by day, while at night they steal upon us to slaughter us.

ALBSWINDA. That will no longer be. Their God is a peaceful God.

VESTRALP. Our war-god, Zio, has not left enough force among them to cry out against anything else.

GISULP [*Entering rapidly*]. Tribesmen, come to yonder woods. We have a wild boar within, and the one who succeeds in breaking his jaws shall this day sit beside our king at the wedding feast.

SOLDIERS [*in great glee*]. The brothers of Thor are with thee.

GISULP. Away at once so that he may not escape. We will form a walled circle. [*The men begin to file out. Seeing ALBSWINDA, GISULP turns to her*] We will bring to you, fair cousin, the tusks for your rare necklace.

ALBSWINDA. No, Gisulp, I wear no longer the spoils of war. I have learned of a kinder Father who says that all life is sacred.

GISULP [*looks mockingly*]. How can that be?

ALBSWINDA [*running down to his side, looking cautiously about*]. I am going to tell you of a wondrous story of a child born in Jerusalem.

GISULP [*with more interest*]. And I am going to tell you the story of Gisulp's heart.

ALBSWINDA. You are not ill, my cousin?

GISULP [*pathetically*]. With a malady that can never be cured without you.

ALBSWINDA. Without me?

GISULP. So said I, my Albswinda.

ALBSWINDA. What is it, do tell me.

GISULP. That I love you.

ALBSWINDA. Love me! Of course you do.

GISULP. Well!

ALBSWINDA [*unconcerned*]. Well, what about it?

GISULP [*concerned*]. Do you not care?

ALBSWINDA [*laughing*]. The heron mother would cry not to have my cousin love me.

GISULP. Yes, but to love you for all time.

ALBSWINDA. Why not for all time?

GISULP. Oh, you child! You do not understand. [*Hesitating*] Someday I am going to marry you.

ALBSWINDA. Someday I am going to marry you, too.

GISULP [*with delight*]. How long have you thought so?

ALBSWINDA. All my life.

GISULP. All your life! You never told me so before.

ALBSWINDA. I did not have to.

GISULP. How did you know that I wanted to marry you?

ALBSWINDA. How did I know? Why I told myself so when we were little children together.

GISULP. You never told me.

ALBSWINDA [*shyly*]. I wanted to surprise you someday.

GISULP [*putting his arm about her*]. You have yet to guess what a surprise I have for you. I—

[*Voices of the soldiers are heard before they enter*]

HELMECHIS. Here we are, Gisulp.

VESTRALP [*following the man with the boar slung across his shoulder*]. We made quick work of him.

GISULP. I see, my brave Lombards.

HADUWALT. Who is going to skin him?

HELMECHIS. Let Vestralp have the honor.

VESTRALP. My honor lies in the fact that I slew him. [*Looking proudly upon the dead beast on the ground*]

GISULP. Draws straws and see. He that skins the animal shall have the pelt.

ALBSWINDA [*running to get a twig, she breaks it up in small pieces and stands ready for the*

match]. You, my brave Vestralp shall be first.

VESTRALP [*turning away*]. No, I am the hero.

ALBSWINDA. You, Helmechis, choose well.
[*Selects the longest one*] You, Haduwalt, be careful.
[*Also chooses a long one*] You, Herman. [*Takes one*] You, Gisulp, my heart goes with it. [*Chooses the shortest one*]

A SOLDIER [*after matching them all*]. Gisulp has it. Let us watch to see that he does his work well.

GISULP [*drawing a long knife from his sheath, he stands triumphantly across the carcass*]. 'Tis not the first. [*A crowd of servants come in, carrying a long table*] Hey, hey, my men, what do you here?

A SERVANT. 'Tis time for the feast, my lord.

VESTRALP. Can you not wait, you Gepidae?

HADUWALT. Hold back, you. [GISULP *begins to skin the boar*]

SERVANT. A day like this comes not often when the king's daughter marries the father's enemy.

HELMECHIS. Long live our queen, Rosamond.

SERVANT. Better said, man, but do you know what it means to us to give her to a Lombard?

GISULP. Nor for a Lombard to accept [*skinning all the while*] a Gepidae into his home.

[*From the door of the mead hall comes ALBION, leading ROSAMOND and KUNIMOND beside GAMBARA and FREYA*] Let the feast go on.

ALBION. What do you here, my boy?

GISULP. Vestralp brought in this beast from the wood yonder, and it fell to my lot to hide him.

KUNIMOND. See to it, my youth, that you hold your own hide on until you are as old as that beast is. [*The men laugh jauntingly; the servants set about arranging the tables*]

ALBION [*watches GISULP as he strips the belly of the beast from head to tail*]. 'Tis well I taught thee, my son, to know the difference between hide and hide.

GISULP [*looking at KUNIMOND*]. Some hides lose their worth from age.

KUNIMOND. Better to suffer an old one, dried and seared by age, than to have a young one rot in the ground as yours soon will.

GISULP [*with an ugly gesture*]. I challenge you right now, [*stepping across the carcass*] and I will give you three spear thrusts in advance.

ALBION. Enough, my lad. [*Addressing his own men*] Take the sport off to the woods and finish it there. Gisulp, go find your cousin, she may wander too far from the camp. [*The men*

file out on the left while GISULP, after ripping the skin from the animal and handing it to a comrade, struts out angrily on the right]

FREYA. Forgive the rashness of Gisulp, king.
[Addressing KUNIMOND] The youth has always been so since my sister found him on the river's brink.

[GAMBARA is directing the servants, ALBION and ROSAMOND are at the back of the stage looking at the distant hills of far-away Italy]

KUNIMOND. He is a true son of Audoin, my life-long foe.

FREYA. How so? My father was a kind and loving king to his people.

KUNIMOND. Yes, but by his enemy he was as much to be dreaded as the claw of the wild cat.

FREYA. Yes, he was. He was one of Wotan's prized shield-bearers. The cruelties of our people are not as much from the heart, my son of Asgard, as from the inborn teachings of our race.

KUNIMOND. And they breathe true, as the snow breathes the purity of the heavens. 'Tis the task of everyone of us to help Wotan free the land of all impostors.

FREYA. It is not right that he has made the

entrance to the hall of the Valhalla so hard as only to be won by the number of the dead that can be counted to the hero's honor. My father's life was spent solely that he might earn a seat in the great hall.

KUNIMOND. What will become of the rest of the sons of the Val-father? If the great Audoin has won that place his son never shall. Pray to Frigga to send you soon to your work among the Valkeyrie before you, too, are lost to Wotan?

ALBION [*turning and walking with ROSAMOND toward KUNIMOND and FREYA*]. The sun sinks tonight with a dark circle about it. What means it, my lord?

KUNIMOND. Your sister can tell you. Wotan teaches his daughter to believe in signs while his sons in spears.

ROSAMOND. Father and husband, your helmets and battle axes this day are melted in the feast-urn. Call thy brothers to come that the result will be perfect.

ALBION [*seeing his men advancing*]. How well they know that the feast is ready.

KUNIMOND. 'Tis well that we eat for the first and last time together.

GAMBARA. The feast is ready, my king. We

have sent for the men. Sit here in the centre, Rosamond; place your husband where you will.

ROSAMOND. Here, Albion, you sit beside my father — on his right, and then I shall be on your right.

ALBION [*in high spirits*]. Thy command is most pleasing, my sweet one. [*Seats himself beside KUNIMOND*] Now is the house of the Gepidae divided against itself. [*Pulling ROSAMOND down into a seat beside him*]

ROSAMOND. I thought that I had this day become a Lombard.

[*The men come in groups and find seats at the end of the tables*]

KUNIMOND [*looking about*]. Where is that boar-slayer? He has won a place by his master, has he not?

VESTRALP. Here I am, king of the Gepidae. [*Standing back of ALBION's chair*] I am here to serve my king.

ALBION. Stand thee well there. Perchance your king may have need of you.

ROSAMOND [*looking toward the wood*]. Here come the children.

ALBSWINDA [*rushing in, her arms filled with garlands*]. Hurry, my cousin Gisulp. Already

the feast is on. [*Seats herself at the end of the table, GISULP at the other end*]

ALBION. The children do well in forgetting their father and king's wedding day. I suppose that every man is concerned only with his own.

GISULP [*laughing*]. We were talking of our own wedding day, uncle. [*Turning to his brother Lombards*] Drink one and all with me, too, to-day, brothers.

KUNIMOND [*filling cups from the wassail-bowl*]. Drink today, mine enemies — to-morrow we may be at war again.

ROSAMOND. Why say you that, father? Are we not friends and brothers henceforth?

ALBION. Well said, my fair wife; friends and brothers henceforth.

KUNIMOND [*pointing to the white strap garters of the Lombards*] To those stinking, white-legged mares, never!

LOMBARD SOLDIERS [*rising with anger*]. Insulting heathen-soul. The challenge is open.

ALBION [*laughing and swinging his cup*]. Down, my men; mind not the vain glory or idle boasting of Kunimond.

HELMECHIS. As you bid us; but the slur will yet be deluged in blood. [*All sit down*]

ROSAMOND [*waving her cup to the enraged Lombards*]. Peace, my brothers. Today heart and hand of the two great enemies are locked in one forever. Forgive the rashness of my father, the great and mighty king of the Gepidae, for it is no small thing to see the slayer of his son and hope of future victories sitting in his son's place. It gores me to the quick, my brothers, but the drops of hate from his over-steaming heart are turned into love in mine. In combined forces there is strength, and our soldiers shall wave their spears in your defence as well as their own. To-day Albion and I have sealed that long-fought struggle for supremacy. The perilous marsh-paths will no longer be ensnared and tricked by the other. With bone-girted chest we will brave the Roman fiends together. [*To her father*] Father, for all time turn your eyes to Albion as to your own begotten son; hide the burning hate in your heart; cleanse your veins of that vile and evil-thinking blood, and claim Albion your son — the future heir to your throne.

KUNIMOND [*shaking with rage*]. You are no longer a daughter of my blood to ask such a thing as this. Wotan will never forgive you for your white liver. Born enemies since the day the sun

forgot to sink in the cup of Thor's mother; no marriage tie can wipe out the insults and the murders they have inflicted upon my tribe. Lombards! Down with your lies, your threats, your bloody spears; down with your compacts, your intrigue, your war-masks; may the poison of your own gall eat out the vitals of one and all of you.

ALBION [*rising*]. I hoped to hold the peace that lay in my heart today forever. It has not been my wont to sit idly by, looking on the sham battles during the short number of winters that Wotan has given me. Love alone has bred happiness and peace of soul of which I had long dreamed, but never known, and we Lombards came to this board to make known that our war-corslets were laid away until such time that we Lombards and Gepidae could go across the Alps together. Poisoned hate lies in the shield of my heart, too, worthy king; it was stored up there by the bloody deeds of your tribe through the ages our people were nestling on the shores of the Baltic. For there you broke the covenant of Wotan and fought your brothers like enemies. [*Facing his own men*] Today, [*drawing his sword from his girt*] today I open the challenge of our forefathers. [*To KUNIMOND*] Are you ready, you venomous whelp?

ROSAMOND [*laying her hand on the hilt of ALBION's sword*]. No, my brave, forget my father's insult, today is our wedding day.

KUNIMOND [*to ROSAMOND*]. Down, you breeder of cowards. [*To ALBION*] I hang that challenge on the point of my spear. You will find it there any time happiness and peace leave you.

ALBION [*to GISULP*]. Get my war-harness, my sharp-barbed spear. No time is better than that at hand.

GISULP. Aye, my lord, now the blood of my race is talking. [*Goes out*]

GAMBARA [*to KUNIMOND*]. My good uncle, do not forget the great love you have for your child. It is dearer to you than life itself. For her sake join hands with Albion, and let this day be a day of peace.

GISULP [*returning*]. Here, my brave kinsman, is your helmet, your shield, your spear shaft. Fight well and do your father and my grandfather honor.

ALBION [*receiving his armor piece by piece and stepping out in front of the table*]. Are you ready to give an account to Asgard, my death-doomed foe?

KUNIMOND [*slightly intoxicated, rushing for-*

ward and pulling his sword]. Have you ordered your funeral rites, O mighty son of a weakling!

FREYA [*infuriated*]. My brother was not born of a weakling, sire, but of the glorious sun that sent him forth to radiate the light of Wotan upon earth.

GAMBARA [*leading ROSAMOND away*. ALBSWINDA *is seen at the side, praying with uplifted cross*]. Come, my child, 'tis but the wine of the Romans that tears the hearts and minds from our men. Leave them to Asgard for safe-keeping.

KUNIMOND. Up, vipers of the forest.

ALBION. And you are one of them. [*Thrusting his sword against the shield of KUNIMOND*]

KUNIMOND. Yes, but a human one that will suck your blood to a drop. [*The servants clear the tables and chairs away*]

FREYA [*the clashing of the swords of the kings is heard*]. Remember well the teachings of your father, Albion. His spirit now cries out to honor his name.

ALBION. 'Twas the twist of his sword that broke the shaft of many a life. [*Back and forth across the stage they go*]

KUNIMOND. You should have taken lessons from him if he were so skilled.

ALBION. His lessons were never forgotten. It is well to wear out the strength of the foe first, so he will not die too soon on your hands.

KUNIMOND [*with a side lunge*]. So I know.

ALBION [*with an unexpected thrust to the left, then to the right, stabbing KUNIMOND*]. But not too well.

KUNIMOND [*falling*]. Oh, I have been pierced — as I — would not have done — a dog.

ALBION. You are no better. [*Standing proudly and looking upon his victim on the floor*]

KUNIMOND. Help, comrades, help. I am dying. [*The soldiers rush up to aid him*]

ALBION. Stand back, fiends, cowards. To the victor belong the spoils.

KUNIMOND. My curses on you! My curses — [*Dies*]

ALBION. Lombards, here, take your booty. Save for me the skull that I may adorn it with gold and fashion it into a drinking cup. [*The men are carrying the body away*] A cup from which to drink to our glorious march into Rome.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE 1

Before the walls of Verona. The castle is just within, the parapets of which can be seen. The Roman soldiers man the walls, having held out the siege for three years. The army of the Lombards and Gepidae, headed by ALBION, is without — storming the walls.

ALBION [*on horseback*]. These walls are made of the same metal as the heart of Cæsar. You can neither pierce them, nor budge them from their hold.

ROMAN SOLDIER [*from the top of the wall*]. Heretics, get thee hence! We call down the curses of Heaven upon you.

HADUWALT. The curses of Rome fall but upon yourself. Be careful as to how you use them.

ALBION. Talk less, my comrade, and fight more. Tear out yon lower rock that the whole wall may fall.

GISULP [*driving an arrow, winged with heron feathers, into the heart of a Roman*]. There,

weakling of Jupiter, your days are numbered.
[*Roman soldier falls*]

VESTRALP. Already the wall is weakening.
We dine in Verona tonight.

ALBION. Good! Brave Vestralp, and a Roman banquet will be yours.

HELMECHIS [*launching a spear over the walls*].
To the fairest daughter of Verona.

GISULP. Spare, by Zio, the maids. We cannot dance without them.

ROMAN SOLDIER. The emperor is but three hours away. There will be left not one of you to dance.

ALBION. I greet the ruler of Rome. He may dine with us then at the banquet.

LOMBARDS [*with one voice*]. A short life to the Roman emperor.

ALBION. Every inhabitant shall suffer death for his stubbornness before the morrow's sun.
[*His horse falls*]

ROMAN SOLDIER. Here dwells a Christian people. We ask but justice to our homes and families.

HADUWALT. We offered that a year ago.

ROMAN SOLDIER [*to ALBION, who cannot make his horse rise*]. Barbarian king, break your cruel vow, and our God will reward you.

ALBION. I gainsay it. By Wotan.

ROMAN SOLDIER [*swords lifted in prayer*]. In the name of Christ, our Redeemer. [*Horse rises*]
[*The walls fall, a bright light bursts out into the streets, confusion abounds*]

ALBION. To spears, my men. Verona is ours.
[*Enters the city*]

SCENE 2

The castle is seen in full view. ALBION walks on its verandas, and directs the men in clearing away the debris on one side, while on the other small tables are brought in in preparation for the meal of the evening.

A ROMAN MESSENGER [*to ALBION*]. I come from the camp of the emperor with a message.

ALBION [*taking the sealed message*]. His runners do me credit. [*Reads*] He bids me evacuate. Bids is a mild word, my lad; why not say force?

MESSENGER. He asks you to leave Italy at once or he will be upon you.

ALBION. Ha! Ha! Please return to your master and tell him that Albion, king of the Lombards and Gepidae, has just taken Verona. His

soldiers are now besieging Pavia and Milan. Ha! Ha! Rome has sent terms of peace, but Albion knows but one word, "Mastership." Tell the emperor that he will find better amusement in Constantinople. [*Messenger bows and leaves*] At last, [*waving the message*] at last. [*Exit*]

FIRST SOLDIER [*digging*]. If I were not my mother's own child I would away with all this and clear myself to the marsh.

SECOND SOLDIER. What to do there but to feed upon snipe.

THIRD SOLDIER. 'Tis well you are here where a great feast is all in the getting.

FIRST SOLDIER. What to get but the drippings.

THIRD SOLDIER. That is more than Rome's emperor has paid you.

SECOND SOLDIER. What! Hold! What have I here? [*Holds up a broken statuette*] 'Tis so long in the ground that the fair daughter of Juno has turned to stone.

THIRD SOLDIER. And shrunk.

FIRST SOLDIER. She is one of the vestal virgins that has hidden her face in shame.

SECOND SOLDIER. Of what?

FIRST SOLDIER. That Rome should one day open her gates to the barbarians.

SECOND SOLDIER [*admiring the statuette*]. Hold up your head, you pretty siren. Rome never would have fallen had it not been for you. When our mothers and sisters drench their souls in the sordid cup of licentiousness, the stones upon which the strength of the nation rest totter and fall in time upon the ground. You called in sweet tones upon Jupiter to save you, but he had wept pitiful tears so long for you that the ducts of his heart ran dry. Then you prayed to Zeus, but he shook the whole of Mt. Olympus in his laughter, knowing that his revenge upon Socrates had found vent when Rome was perishing by the scratch she had received from Greece. Woman! you have been the curse of the world. When you lifted your eyes in prayer men's hearts were turned heavenward; when you spurned the duties of home and motherhood man fell with you. [*Throwing and breaking the statue*] To the flood-tide of Hell with you.

THIRD SOLDIER [*picking up the last of the debris*]. Come now, my brother, be not so merry-like. 'Tis not for such as you; 'tis for the new king that we must sing tonight, sad though we be.

SECOND SOLDIER. Here comes the queen. Why is she so sad of late?

FIRST SOLDIER. Her liver is sluggish; my wife has the same ailment.

THIRD SOLDIER. She hath reason. Is not Albion the slayer of her father and brother?

FIRST SOLDIER. In the days of warfare what woman long can count her loved ones among the living? [*One after another they slip away*]

ROSAMOND [*approaching on the arm of GAMBARA*]. Cousin, I am weary.

GAMBARA. Sit thee down then, my child. [*Leads her to a bench beneath the porticoes*] Here Peredeo will find us.

ROSAMOND. Why seekest Peredeo that which he cannot have?

GAMBARA. He seeks the love of the queen. All good men do that.

ROSAMOND. He seeks more than my love, more than life itself — revenge for my untimely entrance into the chamber of my waiting-maid. He but plays with the silly whims of us women.

GAMBARA. He is but a mere boy — his mother was your mother's cousin.

ROSAMOND. I care not what he was; the less he is attached to me and my people the better off he is. I belong to an accursed tribe, to an accursed

family, to an accursed age. All the pride of my childhood has been killed, the grip of death is now upon my throat. I feel it — here, here. [*Clutching her throat*] Not only did the vampire take the blood of my brother, the prince, but that of my father, the king. 'Tis but a chance that stands between me and my doom.

GAMBARA. Albion loves you. Does he not search for you half the night?

ROSAMOND. I fear his drunken brawls. A bed of pine boughs is better to me than the straw of his couch. I am but a slave to his ever-changing whim.

PEREDEO [*entering with ALBION*]. The queen is here, my master.

ALBION. Will she consent to see her lord of men?

PEREDEO. I will persuade her mightily. She cries and moans in her sleep for her dead father, and when awake she doth but stare into space.

ALBION. She needs diversion, poor wife. The long fighting of men has deadened her heart to love and life. [*To ROSAMOND, who has risen to go*] Welcome, my Rosamond; no fairer queen has ever walked these stately halls than thee. The Romans build better than they fight.

ROSAMOND [*drawing back*]. No, Albion. I do not wish to be welcome. Too much sacred blood has been spilled to gain this home. I long for the lowly home of thrushes on the brink of the river.

ALBION. Might makes right.

ROSAMOND. Behind that coward's boast, think you to hide the sins that have reddened your soul?

ALBION. If I have offended my Rosamond, forgive. I have known nought else but —

ROSAMOND. But murder!

GAMBARA [*trying to draw her off*]. Calm thyself, cousin.

ALBION [*ignoring the insult*]. Good Gambara, take no notice of the whims of Rosamond. 'Tis but the false God of the Romans that has turned her brain as it has that of my daughter, Albswinda.

ROSAMOND. False God, you say, king pretender. [*Laughs*] Know you not that any god that teaches man to kill and rob is false, wicked, perfidious. Death to Wotan!

ALBION. The curses of Asgard will be upon us now. To Wotan we owe our victories, our spoils, our new homes.

ROSAMOND. The prize is not worth the price. [*Leading GAMBARA out to the left*] That which

you have lost has greater worth than lands or castles. [*Exit*]

ALBION. Greater worth than lands or castles. What meanest the queen?

PEREDEO [*as if to avoid an answer*]. Think you that Vestralp with his cavalry train will return for the feast tonight?

ALBION. What care I about a feast?

PEREDEO. To sing of joy and drink more to your conquests.

ALBION. I care more for the conquest of Rosamond's heart. What are these lands, Rome's graveyard, [*with contempt*] compared to the love of one's wife?

PEREDEO. I never had a wife.

ALBION. Lose no time in getting one then.

ALBSWINDA [*running in*]. Father — father Albion, why has not everyone come? [PEREDEO *goes out*]

ALBION. Why are you so anxious?

ALBSWINDA. Did you forget? [*Shaking her finger at him*]

ALBION [*holding her extended hands*]. Forget what?

ALBSWINDA. Why, this *is* my wedding day.

ALBION. So it is, but you are so young.

ALBSWINDA. Why so?

ALBION. It seems to me but yester day since you came floating down the river on the mother heron's back.

ALBSWINDA. Here comes Gisulp. Is he not strong and brave?

ALBION. Strong and brave must every Lombard be. [*Extending his hand to GISULP*] Joy be with you, my sister's son.

GISULP. Thank you, uncle. I have long looked with joy and impatience for this, our wedding day.

ALBION [*joining the hands of ALBSWINDA and GISULP*]. My blessings, children.

ROSAMOND [*just entering with HELMECHIS*]. A soul so cursed should have no blessing to give.

[*Soldiers, GAMBARA and FREYA file in through the porticoes*]

HELMECHIS. 'Tis a cheap gift, my queen; it costs nothing.

ALBION [*circling around from group to group*]. Ah, welcome, one and all, my brave followers. Here tonight we meet in joyful celebration.

ROSAMOND [*aside to HELMECHIS*]. Joy sprinkled with ashes has little flavor.

HELMECHIS. Beautiful Rosamond, your joy

henceforth shall be sprinkled with the dew of the sea.

ALBION. Long have we fought, my brothers; long have we hungered and toiled for the lands of Italy, with reward at last. Today Verona became ours. Tonight you sleep in the palaces of the rich, the beds of down shall be yours instead of the hard earth. Rejoice then with me. Render your thanks unto Wotan for his guidance. The cellars that are filled with mead and wine are yours, the lands of the churches are yours, the gold candle sticks of the altars are yours.

ALBSWINDA [*standing forth with rage*]. No, my father's soldiers. Touch not the gifts of the church. They are sacred to me and my God. He will strike everyone dead with the spoils, the sacred emblems of His church, if you do.

ALBION [*in heightened mirth*]. We reached our goal on the nick of time. Tomorrow the rotten worm of the Romans would have eaten the courage of every one of us. Fill the cups with the age-old wine [*servants pass the goblets*], and drink to this day, our glorious entrée. [*Addressing PERE-DEO*] Bring me the mead-cup that we may celebrate with it, this day of joy, this day that has shone upon Lombard and Gepidae as one.

PEREDEO [*entering with the goblet, fashioned from the skull of KUNIMOND into a drinking cup*]. Here, my lord, 'tis. Look well into the bottom of it.

ALBION [*draining the cup*]. Fill it again — again.

PEREDEO [*sarcastically*]. Look well into the bottom of it.

ALBION. Silence! Begone! To the children of Wotan, gone before, to the children of Asgard that are yet to go, I drink to thee. [*Drinks once more*]

ROSAMOND. Peace to my father's soul; he hath gone before.

HELMECHIS. Albion is yet to go.

ALBION. Come, my queen, heart and heart alike, drink with me this day. The days of trials are over, the days of war are at an end. Together we will while the hours away by the streams of Italy. There I will tell you of a love as only a Lombard can.

SOLDIERS. Aye, as only a Lombard can.

ROSAMOND [*hesitating by the side of HELMECHIS*]. Albion, thou dost drink well alone, for thou alone hast won the victories.

HELMECHIS. Well said, my fair Rosamond.

ALBION [*drinking*]. Without thy love I could never have braved the fortresses of Rome.

ROSAMOND. My father's sword has greater strength than my heart.

ALBION [*drinking again*]. To thy father's sword. [*Hits the hilt upon his side*]

ROSAMOND. Would that it were in your heart. [*Aside*]

ALBION. Now, my queen, you drink. Come. [*Extends the cup to her entreatingly*]

ROSAMOND [*moving slowly to the steps*]. No good can come to me. A strange fear enters my heart.

ALBION. Why should you fear to drink after me? What doth not poison me cannot poison my Rosamond.

ROSAMOND [*looking back*]. It is not the poison I fear.

ALBION. What then?

ROSAMOND. The mercy of your soul. As it has pierced the heart of my people so will it pierce mine.

ALBION [*in high glee*]. Drink, drink, fair Rosamond. 'Tis but the —

ROSAMOND. 'Tis but the dregs of war and bloodshed. [*Drinks from the skull-cup*]

ALBION [*staggering, half drunk*]. Right you are. Ha! Ha! The bitterest dregs that you have ever drunk. [*Holds up the cup*] Do you know it, does it not look familiar, do not the eyes squirm and pierce you, does not the contorted form remind you of someone that you have seen? Look well, fair queen, and it will take shape, it will mock and spurn you this day for the empty love you have given your husband. Stand back and ask forgiveness, ask on your bended knees — for I am your king and master.

ROSAMOND. What mean you? Have you gone mad with drink?

[*The people leave the stage except* ALBION,
ROSAMOND, *and* HELMECHIS]

ALBION. Mad, mad! [*Laughs*] You do not know what it is to be mad. I am radiant with joy. This night has fulfilled the dreams of my childhood, the aspirations of my boyhood, the completion of manhood. I am drunk with happiness. 'Tis a wedding day for me — my third. This time eternal bliss and I have welded the hot irons of fate. Joy! joy! supreme joy is its offspring. Here the skull of your father mocks you, it spurns your trickery, your deceitful heart. Revenge is sweeter than a woman's love, and now jaded queen,

you take the dregs. [*Throws the cup upon the floor and retreats through a curtained door in the back*]

ROSAMOND [*wild with rage*]. What does he mean? He is mad, mad! Long have I dreamed it, yet not dared to speak.

HELMECHIS. Have I not warned you?

ROSAMOND. You cannot tell your mother's sex anything. They must see for themselves. Woman! Cursed have you been since the birth of the sun. [*Draws herself up as the horror of ALBION's act dawns upon her*]

HELMECHIS. Calm yourself, my love. Flee with me.

ROSAMOND. Yes, yes, that will I do when you have pierced his heart as he has pierced my father's.

HELMECHIS [*in awe*]. Murder Albion?

ROSAMOND. Why not?

HELMECHIS. Kill my king?

ROSAMOND. You would take the love of his wife — is that not worse?

HELMECHIS. You know not what you ask me. I cannot pay that price.

ROSAMOND. Am I not worth even more than that?

HELMECHIS. Worth more than all the jewels of Zenobia's store. I will go to Syria's desert and dig them up with my own hands even though I take the turn of twenty winters.

ROSAMOND. I will go with you, help you, grow old with you, but help me first to rid myself of this perfidious wretch.

HELMECHIS. Let us begone. Tomorrow's setting sun will find us on the shores of the Adriatic where we will find a Byzantine vessel for Tyre.

ROSAMOND. Leave this insult go unheeded! [*Pointing to the cup*] You do not know your queen, you do not know that the same blood flows in my veins as in Albion's.

HELMECHIS. Albion is my foster-brother — my hand can never take his life. Ah, here comes Peredeo.

PEREDEO [*coming out of ALBION's bed chamber*]. I did not think of finding any of the feast-makers left here in the night.

HELMECHIS. Then you have not gone far.

ROSAMOND. What hath the king found to do?

PEREDEO. He sleeps, my queen.

HELMECHIS. Peredeo, thou hast sworn life-long obedience to me.

PEREDEO. Yes, my lord, for once you saved the blow that would have pierced my body.

HELMECHIS. Today you shall repay me.

PEREDEO. How may I serve you?

HELMECHIS. Will you do as I bid you?

PEREDEO. Gladly.

HELMECHIS. Then enter your king's chamber, unbuckle his sword from his belt, and pierce him through and through.

PEREDEO [*pulling back*]. Kill my king!

HELMECHIS. Yes. You promised to do as I bid you.

PEREDEO. Anything, anything, my Helmechis, but that.

HELMECHIS. That is the price you must pay me for your own life.

PEREDEO [*with fear*]. Ask not that of me.

ROSAMOND. Thou ungrateful coward. Will you, a Gepidae, forget a debt of honor?

PEREDEO. I will do anything you ask, fair queen; I am your lowly servant.

ROSAMOND. Do then as Helmechis bids you.

HELMECHIS. Go! [*Pointing to the curtained door*] We will wait the end here.

PEREDEO [*covering his face with his hands*]. Kill Albion, our beloved king! No! No!

ROSAMOND [*impatiently to HELMECHIS*]. Play yourself not such a coward as he. Go do the deed yourself.

HELMECHIS. Peredeo, you will then fly with us to the land of the rising sun. We will go at once — show thy courage now, and win for thyself a place in the house of Asgard.

ROSAMOND. I will go to Albion. I shall tell him of what I saw yesterday in my maid's waiting room. I will tell him of your insult to me, me — your queen.

PEREDEO [*trembling*]. No, no, do not do that. Albion would kill me.

HELMECHIS [*playing upon his weakness*]. Kill him first.

PEREDEO [*kneeling before ROSAMOND*]. Forgive me, queen. I was drunk with wine.

ROSAMOND. You have sworn that you loved me.

HELMECHIS. Viper!

ROSAMOND. Prove it now. If thou dost love me, rid me of Albion.

PEREDEO [*rising*]. I will. My promise for it. [*Goes toward the bed chamber*]

HELMECHIS. We will await you here.

PEREDEO. For thy love, my queen. [*Enters the chamber*]

HELMECHIS. Forget not my love, fair Rosamond.

ROSAMOND [*raising her hand and listening*]. I hear him. He doth snore so loudly.

ALBION [*from within*]. Help! Help! Who murders me? Who? Who?

PEREDEO. Your wife, fair daughter of Kuni-mond.

ALBION [*a struggle is heard. ALBION comes staggering out with his hands over the wound of his heart*]. Save — save me — Rosamond. Helmechis — save me.

HELMECHIS. You must pay with your own life the many lives you have taken.

ALBION [*falling to the ground*]. My brother — this from you.

ROSAMOND. Die! die! you infamous dog.

ALBION [*struggling to rise*]. This from the ones I loved, the ones I have shielded and given my whole life to guard. This — is — my reward — is it? Wotan, Wotan.

PEREDEO [*from the curtained doorway*]. Look well into the bottom of it, king.

ROSAMOND [*picking up the goblet*]. The dregs are yours, my Albion. [*Laughs*]

[ALBION *tries to rise and say something, but*

fails. After a faint whisper "The dregs" is heard, he falls helpless upon the floor]

HELMECHIS [*in awe*]. He is dead.

ROSAMOND [*raising the cup heavenward*].
Father, I have revenged your death. You may
drink now. [*A pause*] Drink, father.

CURTAIN

THE LIVING VOICE
A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

CHARACTERS

MARION FORD, sister of the dead sculptor

ALICE THWING, her friend

HARRIS THWING, brother of Alice and fiancé of
Marion

DEATH, inner consciousness

OSCAR JOHNSON, a Norwegian student at the Beaux
Arts

SIDNEY BRAY, an English student at the Beaux
Arts

JULES MOREL, a French student at the Beaux
Arts

JANE SHEIDLEY, an American artist

VERA LETSTISCHY, a medical graduate from Russia

CASH ROBERTS, a cowboy from Colorado

GIFFORD

CLEMENS

Australian prospectors

Students, models, laborers, sightseers, miners, etc.

ACT I

The scene is laid in Paris in early winter. A large, oblong room is the studio of the late Paul Ford, in which are to be found statues standing here and there. At one end, to the extreme right, is a large, unfinished, clay statue, covered over with pieces of wet cloth. On the walls are hung Indian relics, while on the couch and floor are rich Navajos. To the left, in full view, is an alcove, now heavily curtained, in which lies the dead. A few pieces of furniture complete the setting. Death has laid a gloom over the studio, which is felt as the two girls move noiselessly about, arranging their living-room for the callers of the morning. MARION FORD is a girl of twenty-two, rather large and of dark complexion, while ALICE THWING is younger, more slight and of lighter complexion.

ALICE. It is dreadful, girl, I know. We have been able to master every situation, but I am afraid that this one is too much for us. You cannot stay here alone.

MARION [*cheerfully*]. Oh, but I can. What I must do, I must.

ALICE. Isn't there any relative that you can have come and live with you?

MARION. No one but Aunt Loll. Then she wouldn't put up with my freakish whims.

ALICE. There is nothing about you that is freakish, Marion. How absurd!

MARION. Aunt Loll is father's sister, and she never had any patience with him for giving his life for gold. When she couldn't persuade him to forsake the life of a prospector, she did try to have him send Paul and me back to Boston, so that we could be educated under her guidance.

ALICE [*looking toward the curtains*]. Dear old Paul. Think of him dead. Dead, Marion, and you left alone. [*Begins to sob*] I cannot bear to see you suffer.

MARION [*choking down her own despair, she struggles to regain her self control*]. Alice, I know how genuine your heart is. I — I so — appreciate it. But let us be brave. You know how brave — brave — Paul was.

ALICE [*regaining some of MARION's self composure*]. Wasn't he a martyr to the cause? Always joyous when we were hungry, always cheerful

when we were sad in those first pioneer days in Paris.

MARION. Just the dear, good brother he always was; just the same when we were children. He was always giving me the biggest piece of pie, or trading off his knife for a picture card with which to surprise me. [*Opens the door in response to a messenger's knock*]

A MESSENGER. For Miss Ford.

MARION [*taking a large bouquet from the boy*]. Yes, thank you. [MESSENGER *remains standing like a statue*] Oh, I forgot. [*Rushes over to the drawer of the table to get her pocket-book, but upon looking into it, finds it empty. Stands a moment thinking*] Alice, haven't you a tip for this boy?

ALICE. Not a sou. I gave my last cent to Harris.

MARION [*to the MESSENGER, kindly*]. Can't you come back tomorrow?

MESSENGER. Oui, Madame, as I go to the store — early — at six o'clock. Will that suit Madame? [*Exit*]

ALICE [*throwing herself into a chair*]. Poor Paul.

MARION. Alice, do be philosophical about it.

Years ago, Paul and I decided to walk this path with an unfaltering step. Away back there, in the old mountains, as we threaded our way through the trails homeward from school, we determined that some day we would go out into the great world — beyond the great prairie — to see and live. We then knew what it meant.

ALICE. It meant courage, didn't it, dear?

MARION. It meant everything, Alice. There we had our home, our horses, our cattle, the mine. Father had worked so to leave us something, but he was gone. What were those dreams without him?

ALICE. But you had Paul.

MARION. We knew well that life, and it held out nothing new to us. We determined to make a life for ourselves, although it meant toil and suffering. Ah, the night Paul took my cold hand from the pommel and asked me if I were willing to risk my share of the home to help him make a career in Paris.

ALICE [*clapping her hands with approval*]. You did. You did.

MARION. No, Alice. I haven't succeeded. I was brave then because the ardour of youth made

my heart swell with emotion. I dared anything.

ALICE. See how nobly you have stood by him in this little studio. How you have cooked and been the veritable little housewife. You mothered him just as you did so many of us students.

MARION. I have lost him, my Paul. [*ALICE sighs loudly as if to echo MARION's thought*] Isn't it a cruel fate that robs me of him now when I need him most?

ALICE. But you told me to be a philosopher just now. You must prove yourself one.

MARION. Yes, I know. How many times we have talked it over — decided that as it was all a game of chance, that we must be resolute — be ready to overcome those peculiar *whims* that chance sees fit to play at times. I can do it! [*She stands up, her whole body shows determination, as she straightens one hand into the palm of the other*]

ALICE [*goes over and puts her arms about MARION*]. You will try, won't you? You know how brave Paul would have been if he had lost you.

[*MARION opens the door in response to a knock, and three of Paul's friends from the Beaux Arts enter*]

OSCAR JOHNSON. Dear Miss Ford, I am so sorry for you. This is a terrible blow to us all — our comrade gone.

JULES MOREL [*taking both her hands in his*]. Mon pauvre enfant, vous avez aujourd'hui perdu votre frère et mon ami. Je pleurs avec vous au fond de mon cœur.

MARION. Merci, Mons'r, vous êtes bien amable.

OSCAR JOHNSON. Miss Ford, I have arranged for the funeral. The American girls at their club have arranged to go in a body to the cemetery, and the men will accompany the remains. You can send your carriage; it will be less fatiguing.

SIDNEY BRAY [*standing all the while and holding a huge bouquet of flowers*]. Bougereau's and Constant's Classes have been abandoned and are coming to the chapel to pay their respects.

MARION. I shall go too, Mr. Bray. I think it idiotic to send one's carriage when one is quite as well as I am. I thank you all so much; it is so kind. [*She puts her hand up to her head as if about to faint*]

SIDNEY BRAY [*offering her a chair*]. Please sit down, Miss Ford. The strain has been beyond your endurance.

ALICE [*who has been arranging the flowers in*

the vases, runs to MARION's side]. We are afraid that Marion will never stand it. Paul was father and brother to her, and now without him we fear the worst.

MARION [*brushing her hair from her forehead and rising*]. No, no, I am quite myself again. Don't you see that I am strong — stronger for having known Paul and the noble fight he made for life?

OSCAR JOHNSON. We boys intend to do all we can for you. We shall give you more than our sympathy. I beg your pardon, if you need anything or feel a shortage, we will purchase one of Paul's statues. Already the fund is quite large and steadily increasing, for the acquisition of one for the Phroso Club.

MARION. How kind of you all! I cannot thank you enough, but I think that we have enough to tide us over this great calamity. Paul just made a sale of cattle recently and the money still remains in the bank, I think.

ALICE [*advancing and putting her arms about MARION*]. You know Marion has my brother and me. You can be assured that she will be well protected. We feel just a little jealous, too, in our love for her.

OSCAR JOHNSON. Good-bye, Miss Ford; we will be going. I shall return this evening with more details.

MARION. Good-bye, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Bray, et vous, Mons'r Morel. [*Extends her hand to each in their going*] Now, Alice, what must we do next? I suppose I just must go down to the Palais de Justice with Paul's birth certificate, to show that he was really born, before they will issue a grant for his burial.

[*Enter two women, old Latin Quarter habitués, of middle age and mannish dress. One, Miss SHEIDLEY, is a painter; the other, Miss LETSTISCHY, is a graduate in medicine*]

MISS SHEIDLEY. My dear Marion, this is the fate of fools. Another of our gallant boys has fallen into the clutch of that weird mistress — genius. Poor Paul suffered and died for the cause.

MISS LETSTISCHY. What cause? Jane, you talk figuratively. Paul died as the natural result of disease. I was called in consultation with Doctors Brainard and Matin.

MISS SHEIDLEY. Oh, rot! Disease in the Latin Quarter is bred only in the brains of the genius.

Did you ever hear of a common, ordinary being taking ill in Paris and dying? No, we live on to work, to worry, to hope, and to die a martyr's death. No crown but that of expectation.

ALICE. Is it true that all geniuses die young?

MISS LETSTISCHY. Surely, Jane, you cannot say that. Think of Jerome, Rembrandt, Raphael. For a few who have shown signs of genius in youth to have passed away before achieving a place in the world's hall of fame, is no criterion that all have died young. You, yourself, so worthy of recognition, have only been denied it because you are a woman.

MARION. Yes, we all know of Miss Sheidley's worth, and her years of devotion to her art. [*Going up to her and drawing her to her affectionately*] Your reward will come yet. What a help you have been to all of us when we were newcomers in this labyrinth of folly.

ALICE. Indeed you have. My mother said she met you when she came here on her wedding trip. She said that you did an excellent portrait of Queen Eugenia.

MISS LETSTISCHY. If you had died young, you would have been called a genius.

MISS SHEIDLEY. 'Tis a pity I didn't die, then.
[*Goes to the curtains, opens them and disappears within*]

ALICE. What a dear, good soul she is! How many times I have gone to her for comfort when I felt so alone in the world.

MARION. And yet you had a brother, the same as I did, Alice.

ALICE [*with a sigh*]. Yes, but Harris is one that can understand every other woman but his sister.

MISS LETSTISCHY [*knowingly*]. That is true of most men, my dear.

MARION. It was not so with Paul. He understood me better than any man ever will. But Harris —

MISS SHEIDLEY [*coming out of the alcove weeping*]. Our poor, dear Paul. He looks as peaceful and godlike in death as he did battling the problems of life. [*Coming over to MARION*] What can I do for you, my child, to help you over this great chasm? You must come to me and tell me of your plans. You cannot now, I know, but in a few days. I must help you in your future arrangements.

ALICE. But, Miss Sheidley, Marion has me and

my brother. You know that she and Harris are engaged, don't you?

MISS SHEIDLEY. No, bless me, no. When?

MARION. Yes, Harris and I have been fiancés for some time, but we didn't want to tell any one. Now, that I am to go and live with Alice and Harris, we thought that we better make it public.

MISS LETSTISCHY. My blessings, child. You are fortunate in having a dower. I once had a sweetheart, but alas! no dot.

MISS SHEIDLEY. We have no dower in America. Thank Heaven our daughters are fair enough to be purchase price in themselves.

HARRIS [*rushing in all buoyant*]. Good evening, ladies. [*Grasping warmly the hands of the two visitors*] It is a ripping day without.

ALICE. Harris! You forget. [*Pointing toward the curtains*]

HARRIS [*putting his hand over his mouth*]. Yes, sister.

MISS SHEIDLEY. Harris, you will take good care of Marion, won't you? She is worth her weight in gold. Good-bye all, and do come to see me if all goes right, or doesn't go right. I must hear from you all from time to time.

[*The two women go out*]

HARRIS. Have the boys been here yet?

MARION. Yes, three of the boys from the Beaux Arts.

HARRIS. Any from the club?

MARION. Not yet this morning.

ALICE. Mr. Johnson said that the American boys were going to buy one of Paul's statues for their club.

HARRIS. Bully! How much?

MARION. There is no price on Paul's work. The fact that they desire one is a sufficient price.

ALICE. Harris, how can you approach Marion with such details? Has she not enough to burden her now without money matters? [*Leaves the room*]

MARION [*apologetically*]. Alice has never had to think of herself.

HARRIS. No, thank God, we belong to a family who believe it a man's duty to shield the weaker sex.

MARION. It does me good to hear you say that, Harris, dear. In the West the women are always shielded by — probably not the stronger sex — but by men. [*Rises to arrange the chairs*]

HARRIS [*with a sneer*]. The West!

MARION [*with back turned*]. Did you send the cablegrams?

HARRIS. It is all a waste of money, that. What do those people care whether Paul is dead or not?

MARION [*turning around quickly*]. Care? Care? Why not?

HARRIS. Those old cowboys. What are they to you?

MARION [*hurt*]. Not — nothing.

HARRIS. Well then, why waste money on them?

MARION. We were raised together. I would want to know if one of them died.

HARRIS. You would — why?

MARION. I do not know, Harris. But down in here is a love that can never die. It isn't such a love as I have for you.

HARRIS. Me? Hm!

MARION [*avoiding his abruptness*]. No, it is that of a comradeship. The memory of those days when we held close together on the way to school, because we were afraid of the great world about us — that great expanse of emptiness which one feels in the mountains. That memory is the only link, Harris.

HARRIS. It is a mighty slim one.

MARION. Haven't you any memories of childhood that hold you fast to some old love?

HARRIS. I should say not. I am not so romantic or foolish.

MARION. It is not foolish, my boy. It's the dream-tale of the past, the hope of the future. Why, [*shakes her head with animation*] it's the thing I love best to think about.

HARRIS [*gets up from his chair and paces the floor*]. I thought so!

MARION. You do not understand, then, Harris, how, when you are bound to a little group that rushes madly to school every day—a ride of seven miles—there are incidents that knit your lives together. If you could only see that bunch of ponies chasing a puma down the trail until, overtaken, he turns around and shows fight, you would appreciate the ridiculous situation now, and laugh too. Of course, we didn't think it funny then.

HARRIS. Nor now, do you?

MARION [*regaining some of her old happiness*]. Why, yes. Paul and I have laughed many times—so much that often we could not eat our dinner. Why, Harris, what makes you act so strange?

[HARRIS *stamps his foot with an impatient sneer*]

HARRIS. Well. Paul has gone, what do you propose doing?

MARION. HARRIS!

HARRIS [*stops and closes his lips firmly*]. Well?

MARION. Why, I thought — thought I was to live with you and Alice — all together, you know — until we were married.

HARRIS. On what?

MARION. What do you mean?

HARRIS. Do you know what your balance is in the bank?

MARION. No.

HARRIS. One hundred and seventy-five dollars.

MARION. There is some mistake.

HARRIS [*tossing the bank-book on the table*]. There it is, you can see for yourself.

MARION. Your word is sufficient, Harris.

HARRIS. Paul must have dealt in stocks or something. Less than a year ago he received ten thousand dollars for the sale of cattle.

MARION. But we can get more. It is surely not all gone — the home, the ranch, I mean.

HARRIS. You better be finding out.

MARION. Why should I? I have you. I am content with only you.

HARRIS. Me? I have nothing to support two women on.

MARION. Do you mean, Harris, that we are not to be married, as we planned? Why, Paul —

HARRIS [*with contempt*]. Paul is dead.

MARION. Yes, but the very last thing he said was that I had you, Harris — you, Harris.

HARRIS. He did not know how little that meant.

MARION. How much, you mean?

HARRIS. No, little.

MARION. You do not mean it, Harris. My whole life is to serve you — I love you.

HARRIS. Let us understand one another now, girl. I have my career, I cannot sacrifice it for marriage. I have but a meagre income, and Alice must share that.

MARION [*growing stronger*]. Meagre income? Is our love so slimsy that a meagre income can rend it in two? No, no, Harris; you do not mean what you say. Our love is the love given by God — good, strong, and enduring. It is the same that my parents knew, to suffer, to bear, to forgive.

HARRIS. On what?

MARION. Let us go home to the ranch. There is always enough there for a living and more — true happiness.

HARRIS. There would be no happiness there for me.

MARION. That is the only happiness.

HARRIS. It would be my death.

MARION. Life, you mean. Death is here in Paris. Here where men and women seek careers. The rot and sloth of centuries creep into your bones and heart, and take possession of you before you know it. It has ruined more of our hopeful Americans than it has ever helped. Talk of life here. Hm! Why, it is polluted with the worst venom. It fills the brain with the wine of loco, which intoxicates and lures one on to perdition. You think that I, Paul's sister, have been blind to all this? No! I know it, have known it for a long time. I knew that Paul was no longer the boy of old, that a drug coming from this artistic influence was fast overcoming him and sapping the very strength of his being. He walked on air, this vile, corrupt air that they call Paris atmosphere, and forgot that he owed any duty to mother earth. Now, you forget the duty you owe your

Maker, you give up the love — the purest that will ever come into your life — to seek a career. What career is more sacred in the sight of God than to be the father of a home and children, to carry out the laws of man? No, Harris, you will never find happiness in this corruption. You haven't the stamina that is necessary. Career makes its own career. As a house falls that is built upon the sands, so will your life fall, built upon the delusion of Paris.

HARRIS. You are dreaming again, Marion. One of those dream-tales of your youth.

MARION. My dream-tale of youth was the same as yours. I dreamed of a career in Paris [*pointing to the curtains*] but there is my career — crowned.

HARRIS. A woman like you would crush the best talent in any man.

MARION. A woman like me would create talent in him if he had none. My mission in life is to serve and trust, not to lead.

HARRIS. Paul needed you sorely.

MARION. I was always with him. His life was my life.

HARRIS. Too bad you haven't him now!

MARION. Do not be sarcastic, Harris. Paul

is not dead to me. He is standing there alive, and he and I shall go on living together.

HARRIS. You mean to say that you will not convert your mine into money and marry me?

MARION. Is that what you want? You have often heard us say that father gave it to us and made us promise him, on his deathbed, that it should never be sold. It was to be mine, my children's, and children's children. It was his legacy.

HARRIS. Yours to do as you pleased with it.

MARION. Never! Never to be disposed of.

HARRIS. Then you talk of love — your love.

MARION. That is no test of love.

HARRIS. What then?

MARION. Honor.

HARRIS. Honor to what?

MARION. To my dead father's name.

HARRIS. It is good-bye then?

MARION. Yes, if it is only a trifling bit of dirt and not me.

HARRIS [*appealingly*]. Marion, what could we do here without funds? I love you, girl, but let us be rational upon the subject. I will return to you all that I borrow — every cent that you take from your own estate — in ten years. I can do it. I feel it here [*slapping his chest*] that I am yet to

be a Gerome, a Raphael, a painter of which America will boast.

MARION. That confidence is worth nothing unless the something within you creates the doing.

HARRIS. Then it is up to me to do it alone. I cannot saddle myself with a wife.

MARION. The sooner you start the better for you.

HARRIS [*in an entreating voice*]. But I need you.

MARION. No, if you prefer a career to the one who loves you more than she does anything else in the world you must seek it — and — alone.

HARRIS. Alone! Think — Marion.

MARION. No, I cannot think. I feel the voice of the dead directing me stronger than ever that of the living. I cannot break the pledge that I made to my father.

HARRIS. Then your love is but a bubble on the surface. If you aren't willing to sacrifice all for me — your —

MARION [*in anger*]. Sacrifice — sacrifice; talk of sacrifice. What more sacrifice do you want than that I am willing to go with you, to risk the future on whatever you can do for me?

HARRIS. There must be no risk when one's

fame is at stake. My life would be worth nothing without the assurance of a name.

MARION. If that is all that I am worth to you, the sooner we say good-bye the better.

HARRIS. It is in your power to help me. Without you I will fail.

MARION [*pointing to the door*]. No, I will find happiness alone — yes — alone.

[HARRIS *pauses, starts forward, pauses again, and then rushes out*]

MARION [*after a moment's deliberation, goes over to the curtains, and, burying her face within the folds, cries*] You and I together, Paul. You and I together.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE 1

A café in Monte Marte. Around the several tables groups are sitting, some eating, some talking, some playing cards. Through a tall window the church of Sacred Heart can be seen with a few of the upper steps that lead up to it.

[HARRIS THWING, *looking pale and haggard from the dissolute life he is living is sitting at one of the tables, playing cards with three men*]

HARRIS. Play up, boys. I want to win something tonight.

COCHOTTE [*passing through the room, pauses a moment over HARRIS' shoulder*]. Mons'r, are you still playing that awful American game?

HARRIS [*nervously shrugging his shoulders*]. Yes, Cochotte. We would ask you to join us, but you haven't enough brains to play poker.

COCHOTTE. Pok-aire. No, thank you very much. It takes too much money.

HARRIS. Well, run along then, little girl.

A COMPANION [*addressing HARRIS from the right*]. How are you getting along at Whistler's, old comrade? I never meet you on Pont Neuf any more.

HARRIS. Well, to tell you the truth, it's been a long time since I have been over to the Latin Quarter.

COMPANION. Thought you lived over there with your sister.

HARRIS [*stands up to take the game, but, seeing that he has lost, sits down angrily*]. I did.

ANOTHER COMPANION. Lost again, Harris?

HARRIS [*sullenly*]. Yes, as usual. [*Calling to the waiter*] Four bocks.

[*A bright young girl leaves the side of her fat foster mother and scampers off to the left. In a moment she returns with four tall glasses of beer*]

JULIENNE. Here, Mons'r Harreese, my good Mons'r. Are you going to take me to ride on the Merry-go-round tonight again?

HARRIS [*taking the last glass from the tray, raises up to print a kiss on JULIENNE's cheek, when he sees a priestly robed individual rise from a near-by table. HARRIS catches the eye of this*

weird creature, and, dropping his glass, exclaims].
Paul!

DEATH [*addressing the four workmen with whom he has been sitting — without observing HARRIS*]. Don't apologize to me, comrades, for not going to church. I find a greater sermon in all your hearts than was ever preached in any cathedral.

ONE WORKMAN. But, father, confession? I haven't confessed for an age.

DEATH. Do it now, brothers.

WORKMAN. Here before everyone?

DEATH. Why not? I do not see anything in your hearts to confess.

ANOTHER WORKMAN. You do not know, father. I haven't been home to my wife for a week.

DEATH. She did not need you.

ANOTHER WORKMAN. I, father, I spent my whole week's wages with Maria at the laundresses' ball.

DEATH. That was better than drinking it up, as you did last week.

ANOTHER WORKMAN. Father, my old mother is sitting alone at home tonight, watching for me — and — here I am waiting for Marianna.

DEATH. What would this world be without forgiveness! [*Crosses himself*]. Your mother is counting her beads, and blessing you now and hereafter — as all mothers do. [*Sits again and silence reigns at his table*]

HARRIS. I saw — no — just thought I saw a friend. [*He runs his hand lightly across his forehead, and looks at the table where DEATH is sitting*]

COMPANION. Play, Harris! You are playing like a novice.

HARRIS. Gee! what can a fellow do when he is seeing things and cannot tell whether it's in his head or really existing before his eyes?

COMPANION. Something has gone wrong in your head, Harris.

ANOTHER COMPANION. I raise you ten there, Harris.

HARRIS [*impatiently*]. I raised you, friend. Get in the game right.

FIRST COMPANION. Not for me. It's between you fellows.

HARRIS [*drawing in the pile*]. Luck is mine again.

[*A group of girls file through. One leads a French poodle. Another pauses at*

HARRIS' table, while two or more, in passing the table where DEATH is seated, shiver, turn around, and, seeing nothing unusual, pass on with quickened step]

MIGNON [*to HARRIS with pouting lips*]. That's what you said last week, Mons'r Harreese. Now you must buy me a dog just like that one you bought Fifette.

HARRIS. I stole that one from an English lad that was drunker than I was.

MIGNON. Then you must steal one for me.

HARRIS [*reflecting, and looking intently now and then toward DEATH*]. No, I will not. I've stolen enough now. I stole all the money from the best friend I ever had and drove his sister out to work. That's enough of a load [*rises*] for me to carry to — Paul! [*Covers his eyes with his hands and seats himself*]

DEATH [*rises just as the bells, the Angelus of Sacred Heart, commence to ring. The workmen, with reverent, up-turned faces, rise also, and the men bow their heads as the figure of DEATH raises his hands to bless them*]. God loves his wayward children, just as a mother does.

HARRIS. I wish that fellow would stay out of here. He gives me the nightmare.

A COMPANION. What fellow? You must have snakes. Paul Ford haunts you at every turn. What did you ever do to him?

[*The figure of DEATH passes out of door to the right*]

HARRIS. Do? Well, I did enough.

ANOTHER COMPANION. You were engaged to his sister, were you not?

HARRIS. Do not mention her name in this place, sir.

A COMPANION. No offence, Harris.

HARRIS. She is as sacred to me as my sister.

ANOTHER COMPANION. Paul was a very dear friend of mine. It was I who introduced him to this life in Monte Marte, but he went fast—faster than most of us.

HARRIS [*getting reckless as if trying to forget*]. Play on, boys, play on. Get to business. Let's forget that life was ever anything but a game of chance. [*Rising*] Chance! how dear that name is; how I have traveled with that fair creature; how I have courted her guidance; how I have — [*Throwing down his glass*] Oh, damn it! Let's dance and be merry. [*Thrusts his hands in his pockets, and lazily saunters over to a crowd of girls*]

ONE COMPANION. Harris is in one of his moods tonight. There is no use trying to do anything with him.

ANOTHER COMPANION. One of his fits, you mean.

A THIRD COMPANION. That's the sign of genius. We must not be too hard on our friend. [*All laugh heartily*]

Let's get out into the midst of the festivities. Here we have been all day, forgetting that all of Paris is a fair whirl in her celebration of Mardi Gras.

MIGNON. Mons'r Harreese, why are you not on the boulevards tonight? Mardi Gras is fascinating to all you Americans, n'est pas? Choose, Mons'r. Here is Fifette, Cochotte, Maria, to prove to you that what I say is true, n'est pas? [*Looks at all to confirm her statement*]

HARRIS. It used to be, mes enfants, before I knew Monte Marte, but not now.

FIFETTE. Monte Marte loves Mardi Gras just as much as the Latin Quarter does, but not in so modest a way. [*A twitter of mirth is heard from every lip*]

COCHOTTE. I lived in the Latin Quarter, when

I was modest. [*All laugh, crying, "Cochotte, Cochotte!"*]

MARIA. You will never dare to go back now.

COCHOTTE [*placing a mask over her face*]. Yes, today I am granted that privilege. The mother of my fifteenth husband will not see me, or, if she does, she will not recognize me.

HARRIS [*throwing his hat into the air in exultant joy*]. To the Latin Quarter — who joins me?

COCHOTTE. Moi, Mons'r.

FIFETTE. Et moi, Mons'r.

MIGNON. Et moi, Mons'r.

MARIA [*with a squeaking voice*]. Moi aussi, Mons'r. [*Rushing over to HARRIS, and, taking his hand, leads the way, while the others follow hand-in-hand*]

SCENE 2

Boulevard St. Michael is crossed with rue de Pantheon; the building of the Pantheon is in shadow in the near distance. The two cafés at each corner are seen, while the small center of flowers in the Place is barely visible, hidden by the crowd. All is gay with moving people; the dazzle of color from the confetti, whispering serpentes,

and the unrolling of paper ribbon lend further gayety to the scene.

HARRIS [*entering and leading the four girls much as he left the café*]. Here we are, Cochette, Fifette, Mignon, and Maria. Joy! Joy! Let us dance and forget — forget and dance.

MARIANNA [*a frequenter of the Latin Quarter, who, upon seeing HARRIS, leaves her companion and joins him*]. Mons'r Harris, it's a long time since you have graced the River Gauche.

YVONNE. Mon cher Mons'r. I am so glad to see you alive.

HARRIS. Alive? How else did you expect to see me?

YVONNE [*pouting and taking both his hands in hers*]. The last time I saw you, you said that you were going to jump into the Seine.

HARRIS. I did? You do not want to believe anything that I say. I am one of those fellows that's always going to do something and never does anything.

MIGNON. Aren't you going to buy me that dog? You promised me you would.

YVONNE [*pushing Mignon aside*]. He promised me a dog before he did you.

CORINNE [*interrupting the quarrel that is just starting, she enters, gross in figure and old in face*]. You engaged me to pose for your Diana, and I wore out three pair of shoes going to your studio, only to find it ever deserted.

HARRIS. Corinne, forgive me. I must have been awfully drunk, if I promised you that.

CORINNE. You Americans are always promising and never paying. Girls, I move that we take Mons'r as a guarantee for our debts.

HARRIS. Me? For your debts? [*Laughs hysterically*] God grant that I be worth one little sou to somebody.

YVONNE. You are worth one little sou to me, Harreese.

HARRIS [*encircling his arm about YVONNE, leads her away to a crowd on the left*]. I am glad to be worth something to some little body.

MARION [*dressed in a smart box-coat and short skirt with a flat artist Baryé cap, enters slowly from the side, accompanied by DEATH*]. It's Harry! How he has changed!

DEATH. Outwardly, yes.

MARION. Ah, but his soul too. The face is only a reflection of one's life and self.

DEATH. He is only going through a certain stage of transformation. Every man must, to find his true self.

MARION. Do you think that he will ever find his true self again?

DEATH. Just as sure as the leaf turns its face to the sun.

MARION. But he has turned his away.

DEATH. Only for a time. Love and life are everlasting. All things made by man perish, but those by God never. They slumber for a time and we forget.

MARION. There are some things that we are forced to forget.

DEATH. Nothing that has to be forced is forgotten.

MARION. Ah, but I have forgotten all that was dearest to me. You say that love lives — why I have forgotten that I ever loved father, mother, brother, lover.

DEATH. You deceive yourself, but not others. That love which has once lived, is living always. Hatred is the extreme form of love, and is only another way of expressing it. He who does not love deeply, does not know how to hate.

MARION [moving forward into the crowd].

This passing show is all a mockery, like life. Things are not what we think they are.

HARRIS [*joining a circle of girls who have just surrounded a figure dressed in blue satin and finishings to represent a butterfly*]. Sweet Ninette. I will now have my revenge for the time you deserted me at Saint Cloud for the petrified old Egyptian.

NINETTE [*trying to break the circle of hands that bound her*]. Mons'r, he was not so handsome as you, but so much money. [*Claps her hands*] I ate *pâte de fois gras* for three days.

HARRIS [*observing a group of Englishmen just approaching, he whispers to NINETTE*]. Please do be good, or one of my country cousins will steal you.

FIRST ENGLISHMAN. Isn't it ripping? The light-heartedness, the laughter of these young people! Do you suppose they ever sleep?

SECOND ENGLISHMAN. I dare say they do not, although nature requires all human beings to refreshen their faculties with repose at least a fourth of every twenty-four hours, but Frenchmen never —

MIGNON [*leaping into his arms*]. We French

never slept but once, and that was when you caught our Napoleon.

SECOND ENGLISHMAN [*astonished and shocked, he tries to get rid of his burden*]. I dare say you are right, Miss; I dare say you are right.

FIRST ENGLISHMAN. These French girls are intrusively vulgar.

THIRD ENGLISHMAN [*rather short, blunt in speech, with a red face*]. Yes, but deucedly nice!

SECOND ENGLISHMAN [*imploring* MIGNON *to get down*]. I would much rather that you bestow your affections on some one of your kind. It has never been my custom to mingle with vulgar women.

MIGNON [*laughing*]. You are not mingling with vulgar women. I am but a dewdrop from among the world's greatest flowers.

HARRIS. Well said, Mignon.

THIRD ENGLISHMAN. You may repose your head on my manly breast, my child.

MIGNON. You forgot to bring it with you to-night. [*Places her hands over her eyes, feigning weeping, jumps down and bounds toward HARRIS*]

HARRIS [*wrapping his arms about her*]. This is only an excuse for a manly breast, but you are welcome to it, such as it is. It lacks manliness, honor, and everything but a heart.

MIGNON. No, Mons'r, that is the very thing that you have not. Didn't you know that you had no heart? Ah, there comes Mu Mu with his donkey. [*She tears away madly, and, jumping upon the ass, led by MU MU, the clown, rides off, throwing kisses to the Englishmen*]

[*There is a constant filing in and out of representatives from all nations, some young, some old, some in masquerade. All seem wild with the intoxication of the frivolous atmosphere. A party of Americans, among whom are MARION and ALICE, pass along with the crowd across the square, unnoticed by HARRIS. He stands alone to the extreme right, watching the human procession, while the lights seem to fade with the last hour of the night*]

HARRIS. Where are the golden dream-tales of the morrow? Today is ever here.

DEATH [*suddenly stands beside him, but unobserved by HARRIS*]. Tomorrow is gained only through the unknown.

HARRIS. Unknown! Unknown! It is the seeking of that that has been the source of all my downfall.

DEATH. What would your life be if you had

full power to perceive what the morrow was to bring forth?

HARRIS. What would it be? Everything. I would not be living here blindly, hoping against hope that on the morrow I was to find an answer to this longing in my breast; that the long thirst for fame was to be quenched; that this impenetrable brain had been pierced with the light of genius. There would be a purpose in working. But, my God, this uncertainty! Throwing a life away in just trusting that the morrow is ever to dawn rosy and fulfilled. Then to wake up and find it the same old sixpence. A mad rush to the cafés, a gabble with the vampires of the boulevards to make us forget.

DEATH. Forget?

HARRIS. Yes, why not?

DEATH. Is not the struggle after all the real worth?

HARRIS. Just for one's own satisfaction? Never to have let the world know that one has lived?

DEATH. Of what consequence is that?

HARRIS. Consequence? Should one dig alone for one's self? Be a selfish brute, and not do something for the world in which he was born? Should

he not do something that would honor the name of his father, or at least for his commemoration?

DEATH. You can serve him better in carrying out the divine laws. Your life work is not to startle the world, but to study God's, to find out just what gifts he has portioned out to you, then — to enjoy them.

HARRIS [*with contempt*]. Gifts? Enjoy? Hell!

[MARION *is seen walking across the street in HARRIS' direction, but unobserved by him until she stands before him. DEATH disappears. Somewhat abashed for a second, she regains her composure, and, standing at full height, looks with disdain upon HARRIS and passes on*]

HARRIS [*stretches out his hands to her*]. Marion, my Marion.

ALICE [*accompanied by three men of Western dress, is following MARION, and, upon seeing her brother, runs up to him entreatingly*]. Harris, Harris. You here? I thought something had happened to you. You haven't been home for days.

HARRIS. Haven't I?

ALICE. Of course you haven't, as you well know.

HARRIS. This great, glorious city is my home, and I have been hereabouts — somewhere, Alice. These men, who are they?

ALICE. Friends from Marion's home. [*Introducing them*] Mr. Gifford, my brother.

MR. GIFFORD. Glad to know you, sar. This is a great treat for us mountain-bred fellars.

ALICE. Mr. Clemens, Mr. Roberts, my brother.

ROBERTS [*youngest of the three, tall, erect, with open countenance, advances toward HARRIS with extended hand*]. We are glad to know all Americans. This here town can't have too many for me. Why, if it wa'n't for your sister and Miss Marion, we'd be in danger of our lives. As I walked down Saint Michael this morning, a group of Paris widows gathered around me, and even if I didn't understand what they said, I beat their game at kissing.

HARRIS [*laughing heartily*]. This is a great fête day, when all hearts turn young. They knew you were a stranger, and wanted to give you the glad hand of welcome.

CLEMENS. The glad cheek, you mean. Just as the Bible says, "If a man smite you on one cheek, turn the other so he may do likewise."

ROBERTS. I like their down-right spunk. That thing of fun is a thing we lose so early now in life, and I forever after will recommend Paris as the great fountain of mirth.

ALICE. For a short time, yes, Mr. Roberts, but it is the one great breeder of sorrow and discouragement in time.

ROBERTS. Why, Miss Alice, you surely do not know what those words mean? A face so bright and young — know — sorrow?

ALICE [*looking pitifully at her brother*]. Yes, I am sorry to say I learned sorrow and discouragement here. In America they were unknown to me.

HARRIS [*reassuringly*]. You have found the same true in America, Mr. Roberts, have you not? From the West, what part?

ROBERTS [*ALICE, leaving him, joins MARION, who is talking to a group of girls*]. Colorado. Medicine Bow Range. The top of the Rockies.

HARRIS. The foot-hills will do me.

ROBERTS. Aspire to the peaks, even if you do have to stay at the base.

HARRIS. What do you find there? A glorious sunrise, a ravishing sunset — then darkness.

ROBERTS. Better a glorious sunrise and a fad-

ing sunset than none at all; better than the dark alleys of man's moulding. But, then, there is the gold, the sun-kissed gold.

CLEMENS [*turning aside from the group on the left*]. Now you are talking, Cash. Always stick to business. You plumb got away from business since you came to wicked Paris.

HARRIS [*interested*]. Yes, a few pebbles kissed by the sun are alluring. It is just the same thing repeated, whether in the search of gold or knowledge. A few minutes of success in the rays of the sun, then night comes and you grow weak in the struggle. When the sun shines again, there is new hope; you begin the struggle all over, only to make rapid strides toward failure and ruin.

ROBERTS. I never look at it in that way. I want night to come to impede my labors, so the morning will bring added hope and pleasure. If we found gold every day, any place, there would be nothing to prompt the search.

HARRIS. So it is always hope against hope with you, too?

ROBERTS. A prospector enjoys the life of anticipation. Just now I have run into a vein of Miss Marion's mine. Since the lead is on her land, I am up against it, unless I can buy her out.

HARRIS. Why so?

ROBERTS. Because the law is with her. It is a point which gives to the first party that which is his, or at least the lead in law determines the ownership.

HARRIS. I thought that was still a disputed point.

ROBERTS. So it is. But I cannot law with the girl who was brought up beside me, whose childhood was a part of mine.

HARRIS. What do you offer?

ROBERTS. I cannot make much of an offer. My wealth, like hers, is buried beneath the ground, but I have two friends here who are willing to kick it off at a million.

HARRIS [*startled*]. Did I understand you to say a million?

ROBERTS. A million, sir, a million.

[*The crowd gathers. MIGNON comes by on the donkey, led by MU MU. She motions HARRIS to a seat by her side*]

HARRIS. I will give you a million for a ride, Mignon.

MIGNON. Cher, Mons'r, you can ride for nos-sing.

[HARRIS *hesitates a moment, as if deciding between the present and the future, then leaps up beside her, and is off*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene is in the studio, as in first act. The curtains of the alcove are draped up, and within can be seen a student's sommier, covered over with an oriental covering, the back of which is massed high with sofa cushions. A desk and a chair complete the small room. To the right of the studio is a screen, cutting off a corner, where the details of housekeeping are carried on. ALICE, having been entirely deserted by HARRIS, is living with MARION. Three weeks have elapsed since Mardi Gras.

ALICE [*making the studio tidy*]. It is certainly a good thing that we have company once in awhile, or I am afraid our little home would never get cleaned.

MARION [*wiping the glasses, which she sets on the centre table*]. It is always due to your efforts, Alice, that it ever does.

ALICE. Well, you see, you are always so busy. You have important work which has to be done. Mine can always wait.

MARION. You make light of my pastime.

ALICE. Pastime? Well, I wouldn't call it pastime if I could get \$500 for painting a portrait.

MARION [*trying to conceal her embarrassment in the glass that she is wiping*]. I was recommended to them by an old friend. They are no critics of art, or else — [*Sighs*]

ALICE. Else what? [*Gets down on her knees as if looking under the couch*] Let's put on that new oriental cover that you bought at the sale.

MARION. Don't you like the Navajo? Cash would like it better.

ALICE [*pondering as she stands up*]. Why did you sigh just then?

MARION. I do not know. 'Cause I pity myself.

ALICE. Why pity? I do not understand.

MARION. So many of our wealthy Americans get the idea that we students are starving over here, and they want — they want [*laughs hysterically*] to encourage us by buying our poor old stuff.

ALICE. I don't call your work poor. Didn't Colon say last week that your work had a feeling and finish about it that most Americans lack?

MARION [*behind the screen*]. I couldn't do it again. I mixed the paint with the tears of my

heart. From now on I am going to laugh — laugh all the time. It's about time our men were coming, and you are not dressed yet, child.

ALICE. Do you think Mr. Roberts likes Paris?

MARION [*taking a chair at the table*]. Dear old Cash. Of course he does, but he likes the mountains a great deal better.

ALICE [*sitting down on the couch, with duster and rag in her hand*]. He must look like a hero in his cowboy suit. Why didn't you fall in love with him instead of —

MARION. Your brother? [ALICE *shyly nods her head*] One cannot arrange such things for oneself. [*Reflecting*] He was a part of my childhood. Something kept telling me that my lover should be found where the sun rose.

ALICE. Sunrise is always so far off — like so many other things in life. The more you travel toward it, the farther back it seems to recede. But you, Marion, have always been too well poised for that.

MARION [*carelessly*]. I have often told myself that, but I couldn't make myself believe it.

ALICE. Do you think Mr. Roberts will stay in Paris long?

MARION. I do not know. He has been here three weeks now. I just about have made up my mind to sign the deed.

ALICE. I should think you would. I'd sign anything for a million.

MARION. No, you wouldn't, if it were your father's last request not to do so.

ALICE. He didn't foresee all that you and Paul would have to go through.

MARION. Have to go — we did not have to. We did it because — poor fools — we thought we had talent.

ALICE. You have, haven't you?

MARION. No, I have learned to know one thing, and that is that any one has talent who knows how to work and work at it long enough.

ALICE. Do you think — think — that Mr. Roberts likes me?

MARION [*smiling*]. Why! I never — why, yes, girly, I believe he does.

ALICE. Can you not put off signing that deed for three weeks more? Three more weeks [*moves toward the door*] and I — well, I will. [*Goes out*]

MARION [*looking after ALICE in wonder, clenches*

her fists, and puts them up to cover her face. After a moment's pause she looks up and sees DEATH standing before her. Looks hard at the figure for a second]. Who are you?

DEATH. I am Ambition, Life, Love ; sometimes you call me Remorse.

MARION. What are you doing here?

DEATH. Am I not always with you?

MARION [*submissively*]. I do not know. Do I owe you anything?

DEATH. You owe me everything. I am from the Unknown. My mission is to unravel the mysteries of death.

MARION. So you are the one who took my Paul and carried him to your unknown world ; you stole my lover and crushed him into the dust. Do you want me?

DEATH. Not just yet.

MARION. Oh, I am ready. Nothing worse could happen.

DEATH. You have not yet suffered as woman must before her soul is purified and sweetened.

MARION. Purified! Is not every woman who has suffered purified?

DEATH. Yes.

MARION. If woman must suffer more than I to be made pure and good, I do not blame many for not trying.

DEATH. You have suffered for yourself, but you have had no compassion for others.

MARION. Why do you stand there and chastise me for lack of effort?

DEATH. Victory crowns him only who never gives up or says fail.

MARION. I have not yet given up, nor uttered that miserable word, fail.

DEATH. But your ambition is misdirected.

MARION. Mis-di-rected! What would you have me do?

DEATH. Lift the man out of the mire, that one you are trampling down beneath your contempt and stupidity.

MARION. The man that I — am — trampling — down?

DEATH. Yes, you know whom I mean.

MARION. You talk at random.

DEATH. Think, child. [*Pauses*] Think.

MARION. You mean Harris?

DEATH. Yes, he.

MARION. You do not know the shame, the

tears, the lost confidence he has brought to me and to his sister.

DEATH. The shame was created out of the web of your own brain; the tears came from a pitiless and weak heart; the lost confidence was but a mirrored echo of your own selfishness.

MARION [*with an accusing glance*]. My selfishness? Ah, you do not mean that! You would never say that if you knew how I have sacrificed myself for others.

DEATH [*reflecting*]. I have the book of records here. There is nothing in it to show that you sacrificed anything for sacrifice itself, but always for the gain that you yourself would find. In youth, it was father, mother, and Paul who sacrificed — never Marion. Do you not accuse yourself of it each day?

MARION [*shuddering at the sound of her own name*]. You are cruel. Please go away. I cannot bear to see you longer.

DEATH. Where are the sturdy hearts that mothered our children, that bridled the horse that her warrior might be first in battle, that welcomed and nursed the pilgrim, that loved, suffered for it, but loved the more? The women of today, does

the truth pain you, are creating a weak race that will some day rise up and devour itself.

MARION. Truth? Yes, I want the truth, but that is far from it. Women there are who are struggling, toiling, longing for the voice of the man whom they love, but he — where is he? He is no longer in battle, seeking glory, nor trampling the obstacles beneath his feet to reach her side, but crowning himself with garlands of deceit, with which he may sweetly ensnare her. Every man has himself to blame if he loses the love of the —

DEATH. You are beginning to cross-examine yourself now. Can you not see, my child, that your life is only a reflection of the sorrow, the suffering, the intense stubbornness of your own soul? By lifting yourself out, you will express the love of your own being. It is your only chance to redeem the character of the man who loves you. You are passing through the same stage of thought as he is — only you have reached it through different channels. He can never rise without your help — without the ennobling influence that woman always possesses.

MARION. Why? [*Blushing and hesitating*] You will drive me mad. How do you know my very thoughts? [DEATH looks intently at her,

but does not answer] Don't. [*Screams and hides her face in her hands. DEATH retreats behind the screen. MARION sits sobbing, with her head in her hands. HARRIS enters quietly, much changed, dirty and unkempt, and stands gazing upon her. Suddenly she looks up*] You here!

HARRIS [*extending his arms to her*]. Come.

MARION. What right have you to come to my studio? I never want to see you again.

HARRIS. But will you not forgive? I have suffered, Marion.

MARION. You have made others suffer.

HARRIS. I have made myself most of all. My God, Marion, have pity on a dejected soul — sore unto death.

MARION. Pity, my boy? There is nothing but pity in my heart for you. Yet what good does it do to pity you? If I could only make you see yourself as others see you, or raise your head to the sun — the glorious light of day.

HARRIS. So I have, Marion. Let me tell you something. [*He comes nearer; she draws back*] The other night I was sleeping down in one of those sewer gates, where the brine pours into the Seine. Dark, filthy, stagnant pool that it was! A soft hand brushed over my face. It awakened

me, because I thought it was a rat. A soft, golden light shone before my eyes, then began to drift away — away. I followed it with my eye; further and further it withdrew, but never smaller. It went, across the river, ran up the side of Notre Dame, poised for a moment on its steeple, then receded back to the stars themselves.

MARION. It is nothing new for you to see lights or shadows.

HARRIS. Shadows, no, but lights, Marion? Never such a light as this.

MARION. You are raving; your brain has at last given way. You are utterly lost to yourself and to the world.

HARRIS. Do you really think so? I thought you would give me some encouragement.

MARION. What encouragement have you given me? You left me when I needed you most.

HARRIS. Yes, I did. I do not deny it, but forgive. I cannot tell you why I ask this of you. I really don't expect you to, but something impels me to ask forgiveness of you.

MARION. What good will that do you — of what importance is my forgiveness?

HARRIS. A dog feels the kick of his master

more than he does of the miscreant. I — Marion — I ask merely to have your good will, so that I will not feel like such a cur. I have been kicked about a great deal, but what does that matter — they were all grappling, like me, for lost dreams. From you, Marion, I expected —

[A sudden knock interferes. MARION motions to HARRIS to go behind the screen. She looks about the room, trying to collect herself, then, advancing to the door, admits MR. ROBERTS and his two friends]

ROBERTS. Good morning, Marion. How are you today? Been expecting us?

CLEMENS. Good morning, Miss Ford. How are you this glorious spring morning?

MARION *[arousing herself to a more joyous attitude]*. Never better. I hope you are all well. Won't you be seated?

GIFFORD. As for me, I feel as if I were the first chick off the roost.

ROBERTS. You weren't on it very long.

GIFFORD. I notice that there were others.

ROBERTS *[trying to change the train of thought]*. We are early visitors. Miss Alice is quite well, I hope?

MARION. She will be here presently. You know that she is the housekeeper, and I am the lady of affairs.

CLEMENS. It isn't every one who can be the boss of his own affairs. Now, if you had a husband, you see, you would have to leave them important facts to him.

ROBERTS. Well, I can plainly see that you don't know her. She ain't for letting anybody run over her.

MARION. I do not want my way near as much as I used to, Cash-boy.

ROBERTS. You haven't called me that since old Poker Jim took us all over to the Rout County bear hunt. I got huffed at you for some trifling thing, but you made amends by calling me Cash-boy. [*Slaps his hand on his knee and laughs with the rest*]

GIFFORD. Guess Miss Ford thought it was time to cash you in.

MARION. Oh, I had forgotten that. [*Somewhat embarrassed, she goes to the door on the left and calls ALICE*] Weren't those feasts fine, and wouldn't you like to have a mess of bear meat, a roasted potato, and a swab of sour bread for dinner?

ALICE [*enters all radiant*]. Good morning, everybody. We didn't expect you so early. [*Catches MARION's glance*] Perhaps it is I who am late.

ROBERTS [*offering ALICE his chair*]. No, Miss Alice, you are never too late.

ALICE. Well, there is some compensation in that. To be in the right place at the right time.

ROBERTS [*unfolding a long paper*]. You see, Marion, we have it all made out. Now, decide well before you sign it.

CLEMENS. Miss Ford has, no doubt, considered it enough. We have been here three weeks, negotiating with her.

GIFFORD. It takes most women more than three weeks to make up their mind, to my notion.

CLEMENS. Some make up their minds just as quickly as men do. Sign now while your conscience is clear and you are decided.

MARION. Oh, I haven't yet decided — not quite. You know it was against my father's wishes.

GIFFORD. But what can you ever do with that side-hill yourself? A million will give you plenty to live on and die on.

MARION. It may be easier to die on a million than to live on it.

ROBERTS. I would like to have a chance at either.

ALICE. Perhaps you will. You see your mine is right next to Marion's. If hers is worth that much, yours might be.

ROBERTS. Now, you do see that just like a man! It will be easier, at any rate, to fight these men.

GIFFORD. He'll have a raw bone to chew, if he gets to fighting with us fellows. We have wrung a few necks ourselves, out in Australia.

CLEMENS. No, Gif, now be careful and not frighten the ladies. Your raw bone talk won't carry you everywhere, least of all in Paris. Now, Miss Ford, have the kindness to sign right here.

MARION. Father always knew what was in that mine, and he often said that if strangers ever got to wrangling over his gold, he would rise from his grave to carry every nugget down into the stream.

CLEMENS. Well, it will be much easier to get the gold out of the stream than out of the mine.

GIFFORD. And cheaper, too.

MARION [*takes the pen with a reluctant air*]. It will never be more than dirt to me anyway, at

this rate. Poor father never knew that I would have to experience poverty and a few other beastly things that poverty thrusts upon a girl.

HARRIS [*rushes from behind the screen, and takes the pen from MARION'S hand, just as she stoops over to write*]. Give it to me, Marion. It will be more than dirt to me. It will be gold-life. If in two years I have not made good, you can break your father's promise, but, until then, leave it to me.

CLEMENS. Miss Ford has given her consent and promise to transfer this property to us for the sum of a million dollars. What right have you to interfere?

HARRIS. Right, right? My God, have I killed that right?

MARION. The pen, Harris.

HARRIS. No, Marion. I may apparently have thrown away all my sacred vows, I may have lost all honor man inherits, and wiped the streets of Paris with your respect, but you owe this one thing to me.

MARION. I owe nothing to you, sir.

HARRIS. You once promised to be my wife. That vow is as eternal as the soul within us. There is no death. The change is but the passing

from one stage into another. When we plighted our lives together, no two hearts ever beat with truer intent. It is that love resurrected that finds voice now.

MARION. Harris, you were always a dreamer. You dream great dreams and then forget to carry them out.

HARRIS. All great works were once a dream. I thought the other night that I saw a beacon of light leading me out of the mire, but today I know it is the life within me kindled anew.

CLEMENS. Mr. Thwing, you are delaying affairs. I must catch the noon train to London. I must have this paper before I go.

HARRIS. Take it with you. No one is holding it.

CLEMENS. What right has such an indecent character to interfere with your affairs, Miss Ford? I trusted to you to be a woman of your own mind. Will you sign it?

ALICE [*insulted*]. That is my brother.

MARION. It is my intention to sign it, Mr. Clemens.

HARRIS. Never! A scratch' of your pen and you will blacken my soul forever, Marion. I have come back to you repentant. Give me a chance for

reparation. If I do not make good in two years, I will sell it for you.

ALICE. If you love me? Marion, he is my brother.

MARION. Brother?

HARRIS. Your brother's friend. Time has only sealed the tie of friendship more firmly.

MARION. What do you propose doing?

HARRIS. Propose? I am going to open that mine and work it.

MARION. Without funds? My father gave it up as impossible after he had spent his life as a prospector.

HARRIS [*striking his breast*]. My funds are here. My life so far has been a failure. I am going to begin now to live — not for myself, but for you.

MARION. Me?

HARRIS. Yes, you. Will you grant me the chance?

MARION. How can I help you, Harris, after you killed all the love I had for you?

HARRIS [*earnestly pleading*]. Give me the mine to work. If in two years I do not turn it over to you as a paying investment, I will know that you were right — that there never was anything in me

worth while. But until then, Marion, I need your trust and hope.

MARION [*turning to the three men*]. Gentlemen, the mine is not for sale. Mr. Thwing shall be my manager. My father's voice still lives.

GIFFORD. Miss Ford, you do not realize what you are doing. You are throwing away a fortune.

MARION. What is a million to me if all my trust in mankind is lost — all hope in myself dead?

ROBERTS. It will not be lost, Mary, if that fellow has any sand in him, for gold is there, not far from the surface.

ALICE. I know that he will succeed, for he is my brother.

ROBERTS. I would like to have him for my brother.

ALICE. Will you not help him, if Marion gives him another trial?

ROBERTS. You bet I will — for your sake.

CLEMENS. Well, Cash, you'll be flunked out of your per cent. if this doesn't go through.

ROBERTS. I am in hopes of getting more than per cent. Something that doesn't grow in the ground, but right here in a fellow's heart.

HARRIS. Marion, will you join me in two years?

I will have the best log-cabin that human hands ever built.

MARION. Is that all?

HARRIS. No, you will have the Marion mine pouring out a hundred dollars' worth of gold a day.

MARION. That is not much compared to what it has cost me.

HARRIS. It will never give you another moment's uneasiness, if I can help it. You promise, Marion?

MARION [*extending her hand*]. In two years I will tell you.

ROBERTS [*addressing MARION*]. You will bring Alice, won't you?

ALICE [*laughing*]. Well, I may bring myself before that time.

ROBERTS. There will be a fine old cabin in the pocket of Devil's Gulch waiting for you.

HARRIS [*embraces his sister, then turns toward MARION. He pauses a moment, at which time he gazes entreatingly upon her, then turns to follow the men out of the door*]. In two years, Marion.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

The scene is laid in the Rocky Mountains. A cozy log-cabin is on the left, to the right a heavy growth of pine, while to the back is a sharp precipice that looks down into the valley below. In the distance, the snow-capped range of Medicine Bow is to be seen. Two years have passed. CASH ROBERTS is seated near the door, mending an old, dirt-bedrabbled mining bucket. HARRIS, dressed in Western costume, well combed and renascent, is slabbing wit's bark the rude casings of the cabin. It is noon. The miners are in the cabin, eating their dinner.

HARRIS [*throwing down his hammer and stretching his arms heavenward*]. Oh, isn't this glorious!

ROBERTS. More than that, boy.

HARRIS. Cash, it is everything, but I do not know how to express it.

ROBERTS. Say damn.

HARRIS. That would mean that I didn't approve.

ROBERTS. Oh, you approve then? I thought you were tired of this lonely life — tired of cooking and —

HARRIS. And what, Cash?

ROBERTS. Of waiting.

HARRIS. Waiting? [*Laughs and tries to appear unconcerned*] Why?

ROBERTS. Yes, you know that you have never heard a word from Marion, and it is more than two years since you came up in these old hills.

HARRIS [*stretching his hands to the mountains*]. My hills. It doesn't seem like two months, boy.

ROBERTS. Don't it? Then you do not miss her?

HARRIS. Miss her? My God, Cash, every hour I love her more. Miss her — why — she is always with me!

ROBERTS. I understand, but there is a difference. Having the one you love right there in the doorway and dreaming of her there is not the same thing.

HARRIS. No indeed, it is not, but I am so happy to be here that I forget sometimes. It just seems at times that she is here, or I could not be so happy.

ROBERTS. What did Alice say in the last letter?

HARRIS. She said Marion always seemed anxious to hear from us, but never intimated a thing about coming.

ROBERTS. Do you think she thinks we are lying about the mine and its revenue?

HARRIS. No. A person who never lies himself does not think others do. Then, isn't she getting the real proof?

ROBERTS. Why shouldn't she write then?

HARRIS. There is a reason, Cash. I destroyed all her confidence in me so completely that I sometimes fear that I will never regain it. Sometimes I do not know how I can expect it.

ROBERTS. No one could ever do anything unkind to that girl. Why, she is the best woman that God ever created.

HARRIS. I agree with you there, but there are times when a man is not himself. [*Another slab is added*]

ROBERTS. Why, it seems only yesterday since we were kids here, fishing in that stream down yonder. She used to tell me then that she was going away some day to hunt her prince; that she would live in his castle in a far off country and never come back.

HARRIS. I always loved the girl, but for a time a demon possessed me, and, while I did not forget her, I made her think so. [*Reassuring himself*] But I have built her a castle, Cash — right here — isn't it a beauty?

ROBERTS. But, if she never comes back?

HARRIS [*throwing down his hammer*]. Say that she will come back. O Cash, women like her are the kind that save the world. They make men understand themselves.

FIRST MINER [*coming out of the door*]. Ain't you fellers goin' to eat no dinner? Boss is getting to be a mighty good cook.

SECOND MINER [*lighting his pipe*]. The best of cooks can't eat their own mixing. I have often heard it sed if —

HARRIS. Now, do not complain, comrades. You fellows seem to be getting fat on it.

THIRD MINER. I didn't ever tell ye, boss, but that first meal you ever cooked nearly sent me to a miner's grave — down there in that gulch. [*All laugh heartily*]

ROBERTS. Well, Harris has made good, and, what's more, he is making good other ways. The Marion is banking two hundred plunks a day, and

the owner is getting so rich that she has no time to think of us fellows. Just keeps her busy throwing it away to the birds.

FIRST MINER. She will come back, Cash. I know that gal ever since she was so high. There's prospecting blood in her veins what she got from her pa, and what's in the bone — you know. Money is in the finding, not in the spending.

HARRIS. Don't you think, boys, that my cabin beats anything around these parts? Gee! ain't it swell? [*Stands back and looks admiringly upon it*]

SECOND MINER. 'Pears to me you's getting ready to receive your sweetheart. I want a chance to wear that black sateen shirt ma sent me for Christmas.

ROBERTS. Better get it out, and, if Boss don't make the occasion, I will. I just feel it in my bones. Just now my stomach is making me feel pretty hollow. Leave a slab or two off there, Harris, and come to dinner. [*Goes in the cabin*]

HARRIS. When I get my furniture from Chicago, I will be so swelled up I won't know any of you. And I just want to say a word of warning now. If any of you fellows come around here

drunk, you don't want to lie down on my white enameled bed, 'cause if you do —

THIRD MINER. White enamel! Ha! Ha!

SECOND MINER. Goin' to get a carpet, too, Boss?

HARRIS. *You bet.* A red velvet one with raised flowers.

FIRST MINER. Raised flowers? Can't you walk on it?

HARRIS. It will be like a good, old friend. The longer you wear it, the brighter the flowers will grow.

THIRD MINER. I got a hunch that there is somfin' goin' to be a doin' around here.

HARRIS [*entering cabin*]. I hope you will keep on hunching until it comes true.

FIRST MINER. What's worse, an old bachelor or an old maid?

SECOND MINER [*picking up his mining coat*]. An old bachelor. Because he is — well, 'cause he is.

THIRD MINER [*disappearing over the brink*]. Can't tell 'cause why yeself.

FIRST MINER. Just because he is an old bachelor? [*Follows his companion*]

SECOND MINER. I will prove my point tonight when we have all eat supper. Sleeping and eating and working time is all right, but that time between! [*Shakes his head, looks around, and, finding his comrades gone, disappears*]

THIRD MINER [*after a moment's silence, he rushes in through the woods*]. O Boss, Boss, they've got Poker Jim down in the gulch! They are going to hang him!

HARRIS [*appearing in the doorway*]. By George, they are not if I have got anything to do with it! [*Returns for his hat and comes out of cabin a moment later, followed by CASH*] Every man has got a right to a trial.

CASH. Horse stealing is horse stealing, you know.

THIRD MINER [*shaking his head earnestly*]. And law ain't got anything to do with it.

HARRIS. It will if I can help poor old Jim, or any other helpless creature. [*All disappearing over the brink*]

MARION [*descends the mountain behind the cabin, led by DEATH. Silence is supreme while she slowly comes down the path and looks about her in awe and admiration*]. Isn't it all beautiful!

DEATH. That is because God's touch has not been transfigured.

MARION. How could I ever have stayed away so long? No wonder I was never happy!

DEATH. Happiness is a condition of the mind. It is found anywhere — any place where there is harmony.

MARION [*looking at him*]. That is it. Harmony. I was never in accord with anything in Paris. I tried to make myself believe that I was, but I was always fighting a rebellious spirit down here.

DEATH. It was to be so, Marion, so that the worth of all this which is yours would be revealed to you. We can only know by comparisons.

MARION. Oh, I love it all so! [*Looking at the cabin*] I always loved this spot. Used to ask father why he didn't build our cabin up here where one could see.

DEATH. Every wish finds voice and expression just as the soul does.

MARION. I do not understand.

DEATH. You wished in your childhood to have a home here on this site, you go away and so shape your life by circumstances that the man you love comes here and fulfills that wish.

MARION. The man I love? That love has long been dead.

DEATH. Why did you come?

MARION. [*hesitating*]. Come — why — I wanted to see my old home.

DEATH. Do you not realize that your hatred is turning to love?

MARION. No, that is impossible. When the heart has been torn asunder, it can never wholly be repaired.

DEATH. Such hearts are the only ones that know what true love is. Each little piece is joined to the other by a paste so strangely made that only God knows the secret of its making.

MARION. You once told me that hatred was the extreme form of love.

DEATH. They are symbolic. It is a way of testing one — a way of making one suffer to show him the true value of sorrow. Without the latter, one can never know whether he has loved or not.

MARION. I have been put to the test. I have suffered — am suffering — but I — never — will —

DEATH. What if God never forgave?

MARION [*as if some truth had just been revealed*]

to her, she walks to the edge of the cliff and looks over]. Look! What are those men doing down there?

DEATH. They have just caught a man for horse stealing.

MARION. Oh, they will hang him!

DEATH. No, Harris will not let them.

MARION. Won't let, why?

DEATH. Because Harris knows that every man has a right to live.

MARION. But not a right to steal.

DEATH. No, but this man was tricked into it, in a way. He took a stray horse to ride over the range to visit his old father. While there, his father sold the horse to get money to get drunk on.

MARION. He must have got good and drunk.

DEATH. Horses out here are cheaper than good whiskey.

MARION [*draws back*]. They are coming up here.

DEATH. Harris has prevailed upon his men that every human being must have a fair trial.

MARION. He will not be able to convince those men that this fellow isn't guilty. I have seen too many such cases.

DEATH [*philosophically*]. All things become right with time. It alone solves God's problems. [*Disappears*]

ALICE [*running in from the woods with a bunch of wild flowers in her hand*]. I thought I would get here first by coming up the other way. I got into a lot of fallen timber, and I feared that I never would get out. [*Breathlessly*]. Where is Harris? Have you seen him?

MARION. He is coming up the mountain there. The men are bringing up a horse thief.

ALICE. A horse thief! Will he hurt us?

MARION. Of course not, silly girl. All horse thieves are not criminals at heart.

ALICE. But they are bad men.

MARION. Not all, Alice. But the West has established laws of its own. It doesn't give innocent men a chance. Here they come.

[*The sound of voices is heard*]

ALICE. Where shall we go? I am afraid. Oh, I see Cash, but where is Harris?

ROBERTS [*advances ahead of a number of men, who are bringing POKER JIM, with a rope about his neck. Stops a moment, looking at the girls before speaking*] You here? Why Mary — Alice! What brought you at this time of day?

MARION. We have been down in my cabin for two days, wondering if you never came that way once in a while to call.

ROBERTS. Empty walls have no charm for a man. [*Seeing HARRIS approaching*] Harris, see who is here.

HARRIS [*rushing up to MARION*]. Marion, my Marion. [*Holds both of her hands in his for a moment, then perceiving ALICE*] My little sister, too. I am so glad to see you both. It's been ages since — why, girls, it's awfully good to have you here!

MARION. Who is it yonder, Harris, that you are condemning to death?

HARRIS [*turning around to look, having forgotten for the minute*]. Oh, yes; why it is an old timer, Poker Jim.

MARION. Poker Jim? What, that dear old harmless soul? Why, he saved my father's life once.

HARRIS. Boys, bring Jim over here.

ROBERTS. So you like these here parts, Miss Alice? Think it is as pretty — pretty as the Luxemburg gardens, eh?

ALICE. But I don't like to be in company with horse thieves.

MARION. Why, Alice, it is an old friend. Boys, take that rope from around his neck.

ALL [*angrily*]. No, he is ours.

HARRIS [*taking off the rope*]. No, he belongs to God. He is a man like you and me.

MARION [*looking at HARRIS admiringly*]. A man? [*Clasping her hands*] At last.

[*The men retreat into the woods*]

HARRIS. Yes, a man. He possesses all the feeling, the heart and the desires that are his by just inheritance. If for a moment or an hour a human being turns aside, giving vent to some unconquerable impulse, should his companions condemn him? Where is the man who at some time or other has not given away to the demon within? Our forefathers were men like us and understood these laws when they said that no man should be condemned without the judgment of his peers.

MARION. Would you encourage crime through sin?

HARRIS. No, Marion, no. God forbid. But sin is the great redeemer, it reveals man's soul to himself. How are we to know that this heart is not a lump of clay, how could we fathom the secrets of our own minds were it not that sin reveals to us, through her agencies, their true value? No, I say

it again and again that God made all things wisely. He made certain laws by which to teach man the sacredness of his being. Sin and sorrow are mediums by which God directs his children to the finding of themselves.

MARION. Harris, for the first time in my life I understand you. If sin has revealed your soul to yourself, sorrow has surely done the same for me. I have been cruel to my God. I have — oh, I have cursed Him at times.

HARRIS. Marion,— how could you?

MARION. When one has suffered as I have, one could even hate the existence of all things of his own creation.

HARRIS. I have suffered, Marion, for I have sinned, but you, Marion, [*stretching out his hands to her*] you have never as much as crushed the petal of a flower.

MARION. Worse than death to all life, the love that was once yours, that hung on the sacred thread of our two beings, but was tossed up and blown away by that sin.

HARRIS. No, Marion. It is as alive today as ever. What God gives birth to never dies. I have been made anew in this — God's great world. [*Points to the mountains about him*] The love

within my breast has grown stronger because I have found that this life can never be complete without you. [*Stretching his arms again to her*] Come into that world.

MARION [*steps close to him and looks him in the eyes*]. HARRIS.

HARRIS. Come.

MARION. As you have given new life to my father's friend, so have you given me new hope.

HARRIS. Without a deep love there can never be sorrow. [*Wrapping his arms about her*] Into my heart and life you must come forever.

MARION [*appealingly*]. Forever?

HARRIS. Forever.

MARION. And God's law shall be our law.

HARRIS. And God's law shall be our law.

MARION. I return gladly to the home of my childhood and the home of our future.

HARRIS. For here as your parents toiled for you so shall we labor for our children.

MARION. Ah! [*Raising her head*] Father's voice. For your children and your children's children.

HARRIS. There is no death.

MARION. Only the lost periods when poor hu-

man souls are blindly searching for the lighted pathway.

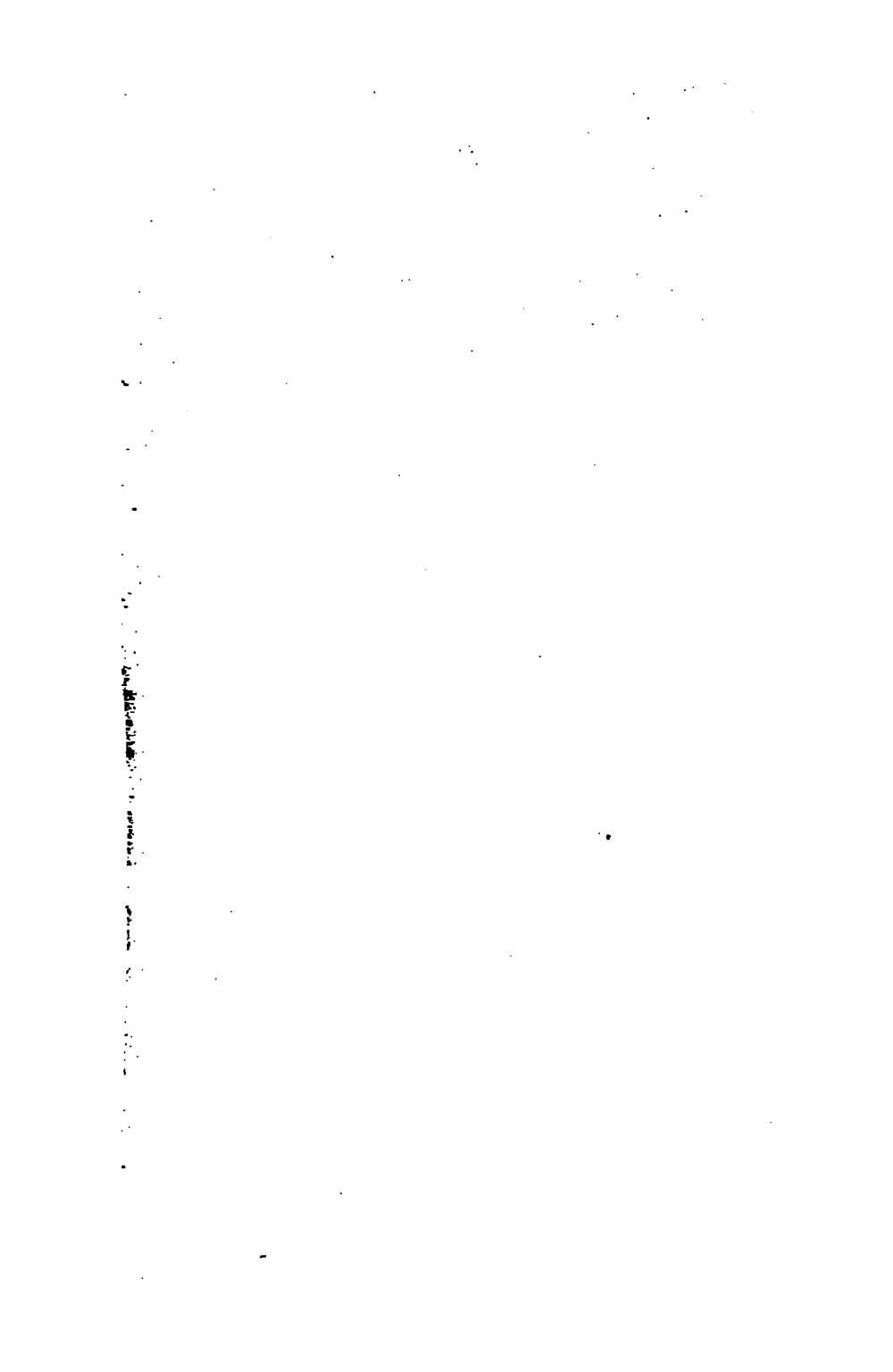
[CASH and ALICE move slowly along the precipice, looking intently into the distance]

ALICE. Will you build our cabin over yonder on the crest where we can hear the cry of the eagle? [They vanish behind the cabin]

HARRIS [stepping to the door, points within.
MARION with slow steps walks into the cabin]
For our children and our children's children.

CURTAIN





**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

[illegible]

